

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP (TEL) – A UNIQUE CURRICULUM

By

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A DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this project is to address the absence of a theological education program for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women. Current data reveals that educators and researchers focus most of their attention to the needs and concerns of the incarcerated male population. So, to their disadvantage, the needs of incarcerated women are often ignored. Although incarcerated males outnumber incarcerated women by 10 times, there is a rapid increase in the number of women who enter the prison system today. Thus, lack of attention and marginal focus on the concerns and interests of this female group are no longer viable options. Incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women require appropriate programs that address their diverse and multiple needs.

It has been documented that access to theological education has, and continues to yield, positive and transformative outcomes for incarcerated men and all of their stakeholders. Individuals who populate this marginalized community, as recipients of increased connections to God and God's Word, benefit from opportunities to gain spiritual and personal growth. My demonstration project is designed to enable previously incarcerated women opportunities to obtain similar gains through the introduction of Christian/theological principles. This project is supported by a qualitative research Case Study. The results were consistent with the research findings that a theological education can have a positive impact on one's life.

I dedicate this dissertation to my late mother, Evangelist Ruth Holly, who taught us that a connection to God/Jesus is a connection to love and to hope. I also dedicate my work to the women and men in marginalized communities who have learned and accepted this theological principle and, most importantly, have been transformed by this truth.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In Exodus 3:12-14, Moses asked God, who am I that you should send me to Pharaoh? God answered, “I will be with you”. Well, I thank God, and Jesus, for being with me throughout the D.Min process - for that I am grateful. I wish to thank my advisor, Dr. Eleanor Moody-Shepherd, for her consistent willingness to guide me through this process. I thank Dr. Lundy for her creativity and her desire to be intentional with her assistance to all of us - thank you especially for the Resource Days! Thank you to all the NYTS professors, staff and alumni who assisted me with a book suggestion, an email, a conversation, a prayer - you will never know how much you helped me. Thank you to my colleagues in the D.Min cohort, God Bless you. Thank you Joyce Jordan for your calming/patient nature, especially for your ability to mature my writing while maintaining my voice. I am grateful for the opportunity to work with you.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Judson Memorial Church, established in 1890, is located in the West Village in the borough of Manhattan. A member of two denominations: American Baptist Churches (ABC) and United Church of Christ (UCC), Judson was established and purposed at its inception to serve as a place of worship and to address the social and health needs of Italian immigrants who lived in lower Manhattan. In the early 1950s, Judson Memorial Church expanded its mission to become, “a faith-based institution that responds to contemporary social issues by working and advocating for progressive change—with special attention to the needs of people that many mainstream churches tend to overlook or find ‘undeserving’.”¹ In the 1970’s, Judson operated a “ministry of presence” designed to help street prostitutes receive medical care and social services. Then, beginning in the late 1980’s, Judson undertook yet another emerging social ill when it became one of a very small number of churches that assisted individuals who were diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. In addition to providing HIV/AIDS support groups for victims and their families, this church assumed a vanguard position as it sponsored funeral services when other churches refused to engage in this function.² Intrinsically, ministry for Judson clergy imposes a commitment to help people that other churches and mainstream society choose to disregard. Today, Judson continues to maintain a social justice focus intended to provide spiritual guidance, support and advocacy to those who are maligned, marginalized or feel “left out.”

¹ History of Judson Memorial Church, [http://www.Judson..org/Historical Overview](http://www.Judson..org/Historical%20Overview) (accessed June 2015).

² Ibid.

The Senior Minister and the Associate Minister comprise the clergy leadership at Judson Memorial Church. Operating with only two full-time ministerial staff members, Judson relies heavily upon its congregational leadership support to run various established ministries. It is to our advantage that several congregants are seminary trained and experienced clergy; thus, contributors to the effectiveness of our programs. Judson's organizational structure includes three components: Senior and Associate Ministers, Administrator, and Board of Directors. The Senior Minister and the Associate Minister conduct full pastoral duties. The Associate Minister has the additional responsibility for managing the church's Arts ministry. The Administrator handles building and rental maintenance. The Board shares fiduciary responsibilities with the Senior Minister. All three components work in tandem, however, the Senior Minister has veto power and has the authority to make decisions without the Board or the Administrator's approval.

I joined Judson Memorial Church in September 2013 and currently serve in the capacity of Senior Community Minister. My duties and responsibilities are varied and include, but are not limited to, working closely with the pastor. In addition, I represent the Church at faith-based and community based meetings throughout New York City. With the Senior Minister, I participate in State and City Wide conferences and assist the Judson clergy to train new Community Ministers. My other duties include participation in Judson's Sanctuaries for Families Accompaniment program, which offers spiritual presence to immigrants who face deportation. I perform officiant responsibilities at weddings and memorials and engage in pastoral care with congregants who need ministerial support. Finally, I attend weekly staff meetings and perform administrative duties when needed.

In many ways Judson's theology and church ethic is a demonstration of Rev. Dietrich Bonhoeffer's theology. Bonhoeffer believed that God gave the church the role and the responsibility to address the needs of the community, especially the needs of the marginalized.³ For Bonhoeffer and also for another significant theologian, Rev. Dr. Martin L. King, Jr., it is the church's duty to advocate for those in need, for those who are treated unfairly, and for those who feel unworthy. As pastors and theologians, Bonhoeffer and Dr. King emphasize our responsibility to advocate for individuals who believe that they do not have a voice or that no one cares what happens to them.

Judson's mission is further strengthened through its hermeneutical understanding of Matthew 25:35-40. Judson realizes that advocating for the less fortunate is, in actuality, responding to God's mandate to provide care and support to the needy. After 125 years, Judson continues its commitment to minister to the needs of the underserved and the marginalized. We are intentionally and closely involved with immigration reform, reproductive justice, plight of low wage workers, violence against minorities, violence against women (which includes human trafficking), gay bashing, and education reform. Also, Judson continues to focus on individuals that are overlooked and issues that are unjust and inhumane. Our church identifies as a "church that is a little bit different making a big difference"⁴. Thus, my Demonstration project aims to develop a curriculum that provides current and previously incarcerated women access to theological education that is aligned with Judson's mission.

In addition to involving my church, I will need to broaden my support to develop and implement my Demonstration project successfully. Specifically, I will need the assistance of

³ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (New York, NY: MacMillan Press, 1953), 503.

⁴ Judson Memorial Church, [http://www.Judson.org/Historical Overview](http://www.Judson.org/Historical%20Overview) (accessed June 29, 2015).

New York Theological Seminary (NYTS) Eleanor Moody –Shepherd (EMS) Resource Center for Women in Ministry. Since 1986, the EMS Resource Center, formerly known as The Resource Center for Women in Ministry has provided a variety of programs, conferences, learning experiences, and fellowship events designed to support lay and ordained women in ministry at NYTS and in their respective churches. This entity serves as an organizing forum that addresses the concerns and supports the needs of women within the NYTS constituency. In keeping with its mission to facilitate dialogue among women in ministry, the EMS Women's Resource Center endorses and supports women's ministries in a variety of cultural contexts, including the African diaspora, European-American, Korean, and Latina cultures. To this end, the Center hosts monthly educational gatherings throughout the course of the school year and, in June of each year, sponsors one or more intensive courses and culminates with a women's conference. Events and programs at the EMS Women's Resource Center are open for perusal and participation of both men and women.⁵ My involvement with the Center links me to educational and community based networks that have the potential to endorse and or collaborate with me and promote my Demonstration project. Most importantly, the Center helps me to create links with former NYTS alumni who can share their knowledge and academic experience to enable the successful implementation of my project.

Because a goal of my demonstration project is to design a curriculum that provides formerly incarcerated women an opportunity to benefit from theological education, I will also benchmark the documented evidence and research best practices that informs the positive impact education provides to incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women.

⁵ New York Theological Seminary, <http://www.newyorktheologicalseminary.edu> (accessed June 29 2015).

According to Jane Maher, an educator with teaching experience at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility, (BHCF), BHCF is a women's prison that is deemed a progressive correctional facility because it offers female inmates educational and counseling opportunities.⁶ These inmates are encouraged to utilize the various types of educational and training programs that are available at the facility. Maher references a volunteer at Bedford Hills who stated that, "Bedford Hills is a prison, of course", but it is less of a prison because women are encouraged to think, to change, and to hope.⁷ These inspiring statements reflect BHCF's rich history of recognizing the importance of supporting the educational and training desires of female inmates.

Research has proven that providing incarcerated women access to education can be beneficial to them. Likewise, data reveals that theological education has yielded transformational benefits to male offenders, their families and other primary stake holders. Both types of research illustrate the significant impact of education, especially theological education, on a person's life. It is my expectation that my demonstration project will open opportunities for formerly incarcerated women to realize personal growth as well as gain a connection to a theology that affirms their existence.

⁶ Jane Maher, "You Probably Don't Know I Exist: Notes From A College Prison Program," *Journal of Basic Writing*: Spring 2004, 23, 1, ProQuest Research Library, 83. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, ERIC host (accessed June 29, 2015).

⁷ Maher, 85

CHAPTER 2

ANALYSIS OF THE CHALLENGE

While serving as Senior Community Minister at Judson Memorial Church, located in Manhattan, I observed its history of advocating for the underserved. At that time, I became acutely aware of the limited theological education offered to existing and formerly incarcerated women. Contemporary data reveals that religious education that is made available to male offenders yield positive results. As a complement to these data and expansion of these successes, women, given the same opportunity can benefit from the same theological instruction. My demonstration project will terminate in the creation of a theological curriculum that allows formerly incarcerated women to obtain an education in theology.

I chose to address the absence of opportunity for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women to access the benefits of a theology. These women have not been recipients of the attention nor the incentives that incarcerated men have received. Commonly, the focus for most educators and researchers has been primarily on the incarcerated male population. According to the PEW Charitable Trusts, Center on the States Initiative, and PEW Public Safety Performance Project, “More than one in every 100 adults is now confined in an American jail or prison”.⁸ PEW Public Safety Performance Project gender specific results indicate that “Men still are roughly 10 times more likely to be in jail or prison, but the female population is burgeoning at a far brisker pace.”⁹ If this PEW report reveals accurately that the number of incarcerated people in America is at a staggering level, and that men make up the majority of the incarcerated community, then it makes sense that a considerable portion of the research focuses on the issues that affect incarcerated men. Yet this does not negate the existence of incarcerated women, and does not minimize their need to receive services that move them towards the same goals and results as men. Until recently, the needs and concerns of female offenders were very often ignored. They remain unnoticed or relegated to marginalized status.

⁸ The PEW Charitable Trusts, 1 in 100 Behind Bars in America 2008, <http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org> (accessed October 29, 2016).

⁹ Ibid.

Limited attention and concern towards the issues that affect incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women appear to be extensive. I came face-to-face with the validation of this attitude on Tuesday October 18, 2016 at a panel discussion hosted by Union Theological Seminary. Michelle Alexander, author of *The New Jim Crow*, and a visiting professor at Union Theological Seminary moderated this event entitled, “The *Invisible Woman: The Experience of Women and Girls in the Era of Mass Incarceration*.” At the beginning of the discussion, Ms. Alexander described the topic of incarcerated women as “critically important but too often a neglected issue.”¹⁰ Next, she informed the audience that even her book, that focuses almost exclusively on male offenders, does not address the concerns of the incarcerated female.¹¹ Ms. Alexander, a best selling author, researcher, and noted authority on mass incarceration, emphasized that the concerns and issues that affect incarcerated women and their families are important, yet they (female offenders) have not been provided the type of thorough and extensive investigation, study, or analysis that is warranted or that has been afforded to male offenders. Ms. Alexander, as well as the other participants on the panel, which included several formerly incarcerated women, highlighted the importance of having the opportunity to discuss the issues and the daily realities that incarcerated women face. Ironically, for a group that receives minimal attention, the panel discussion on women and girls and mass incarceration held at Union on October 18, 2016, was heavily attended. Every seat was occupied and the over flow of guests seated in a different room to view the panel discussion via streaming. Perhaps the large turnout was an indication that people were beginning to realize that incarcerated and formerly

¹⁰ Union Theological Seminary, <https://utsnyc.edu/faithinamerica/> (Accessed October 28, 2016).

¹¹ Ibid.

incarcerated women faced issues and needs that dictate increased research, analysis, and consideration.

Although incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women are often ignored, the PEW report also revealed that this group is increasing. The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) confirms the PEW report. In December 2015, BJS published a report that confirmed this situation which reveals, “Since 2010, the female jail population has been the fastest growing correctional population, increasing by an average annual rate of 3.4 percent.”¹² In an earlier report, BJS asserted, “Female prisoners sentenced to more than a year in state or federal prison grew by almost 3% (2,800 inmates) between 2012 and 2013, while male prisoners increased 0.2% (2,500).”¹³ Yet another vital statistic discloses that while Black women represent 13% of the population in America, they represent 50 % of the incarcerated female population.¹⁴ Bloom, Owen, and Covington add, “Women offenders are disproportionately low income women of color who are undereducated and unskilled with sporadic employment histories.”¹⁵ Even though the PEW and BJS research illustrate that the actual number of men in prison remains much higher than that of women, the growing numbers of women entering prison informs us that a different approach to addressing their needs is required. Particularly, the data that confirms minority women, especially Black women, are increasingly populating the prison system, further dictates that more attention to the incarcerated female population is warranted. Professors Alfred

¹² U S Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Correctional Populations in the United States, 2013*-Bureau of Justice Statistics- (December 19, 2014).

¹³ Ibid., (September, 2014).

¹⁴ Mary V. Alfred and Dominique T. Chlup, “ Neoliberalism, Illiteracy, and Poverty: Framing the Rise in Black Women’s Incarceration,” *The Journal of Black Studies*, (2009): 241.

¹⁵ B. Bloom, B. Owen, and S. Covington, *Gender Responsive Strategies: Research, Practice, and Guiding Principles for Women*, (Washington, DC: National Institute of Corrections, 2003), 2.

and Chlup pose the question, “With these grim statistics, how can we begin to address the needs of this growing segment of a population at risk?”¹⁶ In an analysis of their own question, Alfred and Chlup state, “If we hope to transform the life circumstances of women at the margins, then we need social, educational, and economic conditions that create and maintain policies that put people first. In this case we are referring to the need to place women first in order to address the rapid increase in the number of incarcerated African American women and to prepare those who do get incarcerated for re-entry into society.”¹⁷ These researchers conclude that ignoring the female offender must discontinue as a viable norm because credible research indicates that, to bring about effective change amongst this group, adjustments in attitude and approach are necessary. Thus, research by educators, social scientists, and other interested parties must be deliberate and are essential to address the needs and gain solutions for this neglected group.

As stated, experts have verified through research and analysis that this target group must have access to services and programs that are designed to address their concerns. Having access to a theological education, and its multiple benefits, is an important area that incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women can pursue. We know that the incarcerated male population has long enjoyed the benefits of this educational opportunity. As such, for more than thirty years, New York Theological Seminary has provided onsite theological education in ministry to incarcerated males in the Sing Sing Correctional Facility. Data gathered throughout the years confirm the positive results these male inmates and other stakeholders, prison correction staff, teachers, other inmates, and significant others achieve. Professor Erickson reports, in a 1996 survey of Sing Sing alum, “Alumni reported the changes brought about by contact with the

¹⁶ Alfred and Chlup, *Neoliberalism*, 246.

¹⁷ Ibid.

faculty and through expanding their education to be ‘personal life changes’. They learned how to build community, develop their faith and construct helpful spiritual practices.”¹⁸ Professor Erickson reports further that the male offenders who participated in the onsite NYTS educational program have, “encountered community and have created friendships that hold them accountable to ‘moral living’. They broaden this accountability to themselves inside and outside of prison. The skills they credit to their empowerment are: the ability to *restructure* their lives, *motivate* themselves and others, *create and maintain* values through new networks of supportive people and through rooting this transformation in a wisdom *source*. ”¹⁹ To further support the positive aspects of religious/theological education offered to the incarcerated male community, a study by Kerley, Matthews, and Blanchard assert that religious education for this community “directly reduces the likelihood of arguing and indirectly reduces the likelihood of fighting.”²⁰ The Sing Sing report contains incidences of positive outcomes that appeared to be beneficial to the male offender and all of his stake holders. Moreover, it is noted that recidivism rates and internal conflicts decreased while visible positive behaviors increased.

Providing incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women access to a theological education will, in all probability, generate similar outcomes. Educator, Jane Maher supports the claim that creating an educational program in prison is significant because, “It brings the women together as a community of learners, not as isolated inmates struggling to survive in a system that

¹⁸ Victoria Lee Erickson, “Social Theory, Sacred Text, and Sing Sing Prison: A Sociology of Community Based Reconciliation”, quoted in T. O’Connor and N.J. Pallone, Eds., *Religion, the Community, and the Rehabilitation of Criminal Offenders*, (New York: Hawthorne Press), 2002: 239.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ K. Kerley, T. Matthews and T. Blanchard, “Religiosity, Religious Participation, and Negative Prison Behaviors,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, (Dec.2005): 443-457.

is, at best, unpredictable and all too often cruel and degrading.”²¹ Maher continues her assertion that educational programs in prisons, “help these women overcome a pervading sense of not belonging, of not being worthy of attention, of not having a voice, a place, a future.”²² Maher’s assertions identify the personal and positive group outcomes that incarcerated women who participate in educational programs realize. Michelle Fine, another educator/researcher, who is familiar with educational programs for female offenders, supports and extends Maher’s assertion. Fine states that, “In 2001, the Department of Corrections conducted a study which, documents a 7.7% re-incarceration rate over 36 months for women with college, compared to a 29.9% re-incarceration rate for the without college. College in prison reduces re-incarceration rates, reduces crime.”²³ Both Maher and Fine establish compelling arguments for the existence of educational programs in women’s correctional facilities, especially because of the beneficial outcomes for all stakeholders (the women, their significant others and the facilities they inhabit).

My Theological Education and Leadership (TEL) curriculum is designed to introduce women, particularly formerly incarcerated women, to supportive, encouraging and transformative aspects of Christian education. Women will be introduced to aspects of Christian education that connect them to an affirming and accessible God of love, care, and guidance. The TEL curriculum comprises Biblical, historical, theological and practical studies with an intentional focus on the participation and contributions of women throughout the Bible and the

²¹ Jane Maher, “My Way Out of This Life is an Education”, *Women’s Quarterly*, (Spring 2004): 32 (ProQuest Research Library): 112. ATLA Religion Database with ATLA Serials, ERIC host (accessed June 30, 2015).

²² _____, “You Probably Don’t Know I Exist: Notes From A College Prison Program”, *Journal of Basic Writing*, (Spring 2004), 23, (ProQuest Research Library: 89. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, ERIC host (accessed June 29, 2015).

²³ M. Fine, M. Torre, K. Boudin, I. Bowen, J. Clark, D. Hylton, M. Martinez, “Missy” R. Roberts, P. Smart, & D. Upequi, quoted in *Changing minds: The Impact of college in a maximum security prison*, 4. Final Report, Graduate Center , (CUNY,2001), Available: <http://www.changingminds.ws>.

beginning of spreading the “Good News”. The curriculum will offer a unique learning experience for those who seek to increase their biblical as well as spiritual understanding. The Theological Education and Leadership curriculum is open to and appropriate for women who are characterized by Christian and non-Christian backgrounds. It is expected that exposure to theological education will offer this population benefits that present optimistic outlooks for their future.

As Professor Yolanda Smith states, “Through Christian education, African American women must be empowered to name and critique dominant ideologies, theologies, and practices that are oppressive to Black women, namely engaging in a process that enables and encourages them to articulate a critical reflection of their experiences in relation to various systems, structures, and traditions to determine which aspects of their experiences are liberating and/or oppressive.”²⁴ Thus, Christian/theological education will assist the women in the discovery of biblical texts that affirm, connect to love of self, and love for others. The ultimate goal is to produce an effective and acceptable TEL curriculum that can be implemented in targeted environments and replicated for diverse environments.

My Theological Education and Leadership Curriculum will require a TEL “Pilot” program. This pilot program will recruit women volunteers to participate in all eight survey courses in the TEL Curriculum. The topics for examination are: Biblical Exegesis, First Testament, Second Testament, Introduction to Theology, Church History, Church Ethics, Pastoral Care, and Women and Leadership. Participation in this program will offer the women an opportunity to study and discuss aspects of theological education. Most importantly, the women will evaluate each segment of the program and openly express their reactions and

²⁴ Yolanda Y. Smith, “Womanist Theology: Empowering Women Through Christian Education,” *Black Theology: An International Journal*: 213.

suggestions on the value of the material covered. All participants will be compensated with meals and carfare at each session.

Together with my Site Team, I will address funding sources for the TEL Pilot program as we are tasked with providing tools and materials for the initial classes. Funding must include transportation, meals, class materials and location costs, if any. In addition, we must assemble an instructional team wherein I will serve as lead. I anticipate that I will source most of the professors by means of my appeal to the Eleanor Moody-Shepherd Resource Center for Women in Ministry. This organization will grant me access to volunteer female and male seminarians who are willing and credentialed to teach the community of students designated for this project. During the Pilot's implementation, I will continue to investigate other funding options.

To support the target group, I will utilize the assistance of two formerly incarcerated women, NYTS staff and students, my Site Team and other resources to help me identify and recruit women to participate in the TEL Pilot program. In addition, I will attend related conferences and join or address diverse meetings to inform and recruit individuals for this effort.

Because the original focus of this program, and many of the diverse entities have changed, we will face potential challenges. Many previously incarcerated women may be limited by the necessity to continue to follow guidelines set by the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision. In addition, my project requires absolute transparency with reference to its purpose and goals. To satisfy this need, I must provide a complete description of my Demonstration project, along with its components parts, as well as the nature of the women's involvement, to the women contributors and to any legal entities that are connected to this project or its participants.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH QUESTIONS ANALYSES

RESEARCH QUESTION #1 - HISTORICAL

What has been the history of the value of onsite accredited programs in ministry afforded to New York State male offenders? Would access to Christian/theological education for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women create similar levels of individual and organizational success?

On May 7, 2015, the National Council of Churches of Christ in The USA created a document entitled, “Starter Kit for Teaching and Learning About Mass Incarceration”, edited by Rev. Dr. Joseph V. Crockett. In his Introduction, Dr. Crockett states, “The New York Theological Seminary’s Masters of Professional Studies Program at Sing Sing Correctional Facility is an educational model of transformative education. Here, we who enjoy various degrees of freedom outside of prison walls are called to consider and to more fully embody the freedom Jesus Christ makes possible. We are challenged to employ our freedom in Christ for the work of reconciliation with the ‘other’. A clear outcome of this educational exchange is that inmates become teachers and those who live beyond the bars and chains of correctional facilities to become learners.”²⁵ More than thirty years after the New York Theological Seminary’s (NYTS) Sing Sing program began, clergy and educators continue to acknowledge the importance and ministerial necessity of the program. Dr. Crockett’s analysis reveals that students (the male inmates) receive aspects of Christian and theological education that afford them opportunities to connect to spiritual principles that, when internalized, will yield positive changes that impact their attitude and approach to life. The potential to experience this type of transformation is not limited in scope or reality. Moreover, the impact extends beyond the inmates’ immediate milieu;

²⁵ Joseph V. Crockett, *Starter Kit for Teaching and Learning About Mass Incarceration*, National Council of Churches in the USA., Washington, DC, 2015, 6.

other inmates, their families, and the correctional authorities benefit from their participation in the NYTS Masters of Professional Studies (MPS) Program offered at Sing Sing. In his assessment, Rev. Crockett informs us that religious leaders, who are followers of Jesus Christ, have a ministerial responsibility to address the concerns and needs of the incarcerated as well as the formerly incarcerated community. Dr. Crockett references examples of biblical authority that demonstrate God's and Jesus' interactions with individuals who were imprisoned or set free, and yet remained spiritually connected.²⁶ Furthermore, he acknowledges that men and women in the Bible, who experienced oppression, isolation and disrespect, were not victims of the absence of God's love and care. Instead, the imprisoned were included and, they too, received love, kindness and support from God and from Jesus. Dr. Crockett continues in his assessment to explain that clergy have a theological, as well as a Christological, obligation to follow the examples set by God and Jesus. As such, the clergy must advocate, support, teach and, most importantly, exhibit love and respect for the men and women in these settings. Thus, the New York Theological Seminary, while offering the Masters in Professional Studies degree program, is simultaneously addressing a ministerial and spiritual mandate that is established in biblical text from God and Jesus. This command requires and expects clergy to demonstrate love, care and support to all people. It necessarily includes the marginalized, the so-called 'other' and, most importantly, those in need.

A biblical example of Jesus' decree to Christian clergy, to abide by God's mandate, is cited in the Gospel of Matthew 25:34-40 (NRSV). In this pericope, Jesus is sitting at a mountain called "Mount Olive" where He is having a discussion with His disciples, a discussion that

²⁶ Ibid., 69.

actually began in the previous chapter, Matthew 24. So, here in Matt 25:34-40 (NRSV) Jesus tells His disciples:

Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me. Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you? And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.

In these biblical passages, Jesus clearly explains to His disciples the importance of addressing the needs of people who face diverse, troublesome and stressful situations. In His descriptions of the types of negative experiences that one might encounter, Jesus does not evaluate or judge the type of assistance a person might require. Whether hungry, thirsty, in need of lodging, sick or in prison, each condition requires help and is equally important. Another key observation that Jesus highlights for His disciples is that the sick, the hungry, the homeless, and the imprisoned are members of His family. Jesus' words, that spoke to inclusion, illustrate that He valued marginalized individuals. In this scripture Jesus communicates openly that it is important and necessary to include diverse people who present diverse issues to his family.

In yet an earlier biblical text, found also in the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 22:36-40, NRSV), there is a different, yet just as powerful example of scriptural support that demonstrates the NYTS Masters program at Sing Sing follows God's mandate to love and care for people in need. In Matt 22:36-40 (NRSV), one of the Pharisees, assumed to be a lawyer, posed a question to Jesus, a question designed to test or trick Him, “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second

is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Jesus' answer to the Pharisee lawyer's question reveals the specific commandments that God has identified as being of the highest importance. Establishing love for God, love for self and love for neighbor, is the most important directive to follow. It is in this directive that we must acknowledge that humankind has a responsibility to each other because everyone is a neighbor to someone. Obeying God's highest commandment is recognizing the need to show love, care and concern to all individuals, which includes persons who are the subject of this dissertation. The essence of both of these scriptures provide biblical and theological validity to Dr. Crockett's claim that the NYTS MPS Program at the Sing Sing Correctional facility is relevant and essential.

Although this program at Sing Sing Correctional Facility, that offers male inmates a Christian/theological education, was a new and exciting initiative, it did not begin without obstacles. At first, it faced several levels of challenges in various arenas that caused some delays in its initial start-up. To provide a backdrop to the initiation of the current program, I will describe the series of steps that led to its inception. In the Spring of 1981, a New York State prison chaplain, who was a Methodist Pastor, accompanied by a Reformed Church volunteer, convened a meeting with the then NYTS president, Dr. George W. Webber. The meeting was purposed to request a NYTS sponsored onsite seminary graduate program that would service incarcerated male prisoners.²⁷ The Methodist Pastor and the Reformed Church volunteer informed the NYTS president that more than 400 male inmates, each with extensive prison sentences, had obtained undergraduate degrees while incarcerated in various New York State correctional facilities. They continued, "Many of these men had a very strong faith, either

²⁷George W. Webber, *Led by the Spirit*, (Pilgrim Press: New York, 1990), 111.

Christian or Muslim, and were eager to continue higher education.”²⁸ These ministerial leaders were making the case that the 400 male inmates from various New York State correctional facilities were a captive audience of excited, potential students. It became apparent that these incarcerated men exhibited two major characteristics to the ministerial leaders who were the inmates’ functioning advocates. They convinced their self-appointed advocates that they were willing, eager and motivated to take advantage of an opportunity to increase their knowledge through participation in a Christian/theological education program. Additionally, these men communicated that they possessed the requisite experience with the rigors of higher learning that emphasize intentional individual and collective studying systems demonstrated by their successful completion of accredited college disciplines while incarcerated.

Dr. George Webber, the NYTS president, upon considering the substance of this meeting with the chaplain and the volunteer, was confident that the seminary would be able to develop a curriculum for an onsite theological educational program. However, he knew that undertaking this initiative would not be without challenges. Dr. Webber offered, “I came to feel that it would not be difficult for us to shape such a program if it were held at some nearby prison and we were able to recruit really serious students. The problem was not the capability of the seminary to mount such a program; it was the inevitable reluctance of the state correctional system to permit it.”²⁹ Here, Dr. Webber’s main concern was not NYTS’ ability to create an appropriate onsite Christian/theological educational program for incarcerated men, nor teaching male inmates, nor identifying competent professors. The problem was obtaining permission from the New York State Department of Corrections to implement this trailblazing initiative. The validity of this

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

concern surfaced immediately when the Department of Corrections posed a philosophical inquiry as to how would incarcerated men benefit from obtaining a college education, especially a post baccalaureate degree. For many DOC staff, prison was a place for people who committed a crime.³⁰ Fortunately, Dr. Webber found support inside the NYTS DOC in the person of Deputy Commissioner Earl Moore, whose duties included managing ministerial and family services. An added advantage of having Deputy Commissioner Moore's involvement at the onset of the initiative was his prior connection with NYTS. He was also Dr. Earl Moore, a NYTS alum.³¹ Dr. Webber reports, "Moore responded with enthusiasm to the proposal for such a continuing education program and was determined to do everything in his power to gain the necessary permission and cooperation. Only his presence gave us any chance of pulling it off. We already had authorization from the state to offer a thirty- six credit master of professional studies .I wrote up a draft curriculum that would provide the prisoner-students with the insight, knowledge, and skills to work as lay pastors as long as they remained in the prison system."³² Thus, Dr. Webber won approval from the academic oversights and he developed a detailed educational plan for the students.

With Deputy Commissioner Moore's support, Dr. Webber gained approval from the DOC to establish an on-site curriculum for Masters in Professional Studies. Although this was a major win, it came with additional challenges. First, the location needed to be addressed. Because the Sing Sing Correctional Facility was selected to house the program, recruitment and student pre-requisites became the primary focus. Inmates learned about the program from their

³⁰ Ibid., 113.

³¹ Ibid., 112.

³² Ibid.

chaplains who were communicating with their counterparts throughout the New York State Correctional Facilities.³³ Candidates who expressed interest in the program, yet resided in prison facilities outside of Sing Sing, were required to transfer to Sing Sing and remain there for the duration of the 11-month program. In addition, each candidate must have acquired an undergraduate degree and, finally, must have obtained a recommendation from their Chaplain and DOC leadership. This written recommendation must specify the inmates' individual spiritual commitment.³⁴ Due to the levels of organizational and individual requirements that had to be assessed, the initial start of the program moved at a very slow pace. However, Dr. Webber states, "We postponed the beginning date to August 1, then to September 1, and were fully prepared to abort the whole program when it finally fell into place around the middle of September. We had secured an excellent faculty who were blessed with the patience to hold open the time for us until we were finally able to begin at the end of September."³⁵ Over time, Dr. Webber and Deputy Commissioner Moore, along with other NYTS and DOCS supporters, were able to bring the NYTS MPS program to fruition.

In the Fall of 1982, the NYTS onsite Christian/theological graduate level program at Sing Sing Correctional Facility for male inmates became operational. It still faced yet another major hurdle: the collective sponsors needed to identify funding sources. From the beginning, Dr. Webber realized that funding would be a challenge and, initially, he had trouble securing the funds for the program.³⁶ However, Dr. Webber shares an encouraging and somewhat spiritual

³³ Ibid., 113.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.,114.

³⁶ Ibid.

account that describes how NYTS was able to obtain funding for the first year of the MPS program. He reports,

Several efforts in the Spring of 1982, however, had been unsuccessful.....
By August 1, however I had not come up with anything. The day before I left on my vacation, one of our M.Div. students, an older businessman who was planning on a second career in ministry to alcoholics, came by for a talk. I was describing the program to him with no thought of asking for funds when he said, 'you've got \$5,000.' That unexpected gift gave me a little confidence that we would indeed find the funds. And that proved to be the case in subsequent months. Individuals, congregations, and foundations were stirred by the imagination of the program, and before the end of December, we found the total amount necessary to cover the cost of the first year³⁷

According to Dr. Webber, the challenge of securing funding was solved because people were interested in and supportive of this new initiative. It appears the supporters of the new program recognized the value of developing and sustaining such an initiative.

From September 1982 until the present, more than thirty-four years, the New York Theological Seminary Masters in Professional Studies program at Sing Sing Correctional Facility continues to exist and continues to demonstrate its unique value to the students and its various stakeholders. This program currently accepts 15 inmates each year. Its core curriculum is built around Bible study, Church Ethics, Church History, and pastoral counseling.³⁸ However, the students' training includes more than just basic theology courses. Thomas O'Connor et al. informs us that the program leads them to,

Understanding one's life circumstance from the dual perspective of personal and social morality empowers the student with skills to transform both self and society. Students are taught a variety of hermeneutical tools to exegete and interpret scripture and daily life. Racism, sexism, and classism are societal oppressions that are routinely addressed. Regardless of their faith affiliation, Christian, Muslim and Jewish students reflect upon each other's sacred texts and religious experiences. Students learn how to talk across differences and how to transform a moment of frustration and conflict into a moment of joy? constructive learning.³⁹

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Thomas O'Connor, Victoria L. Erickson, Patricia Ryan, and Crystal Parikh, "Theology and Community Corrections in a Prison Setting". *Community Corrections Report*, (Kingston, NJ: Civic Research Institute, 1997): 68.

³⁹ Ibid.

Thus, this program provides the inmates not only with the opportunity to acquire new theological concepts and a new awareness of different faiths, they also provide a platform upon which to address contemporary issues that affect them individually and collectively. Moreover, there are two significant outcomes that this program yields for the participants: an opportunity to recognize they have value and they gain tools and explore alternatives that they can utilize to handle conflicts. The ability to study and discuss biblical texts that convey God's love for all people can be vital to individuals who believe that they are not worthy of God's love and support. As Dr. Victoria Lee Erickson affirms, "NYTS teaches all of its students to claim and reclaim their rightful identity as valued members of society."⁴⁰ Dr. Erickson goes on to say, "They learned how to build community, develop their faith and construct helpful spiritual practices. One commented:

I have good memories of the 1987-1988 class and realize it was a turning point in my rehabilitation....The year at NYTS was very important to me to not lose faith and that I could and would be redeemed from the sin of the past. The faculty were important in this development. Here I was a student a person- and not just a convict. This is very important.⁴¹

Dr. Erickson and the students' comments confirm that, when given the opportunity to study religion and theology, one's own self respect and respect for others increases. The inmates who participate in the NYTS MPS program have reported that they acquired skills and incorporated spiritual practices that have aided in building positive relationships and, instilled qualities that

⁴⁰ Victoria Lee Erickson, *Social Theory, Sacred Text, and Sing- Sing Prison: A Sociology of Community-Based Reconciliation*, edited by T. O'Connor and N.J. Pallone, Eds. "Religion, the Community, and the Rehabilitation of Criminal Offenders." (Binghamton, New York: Hawthorne Press), 244.

⁴¹ Ibid., 245.

empower them to hold themselves and others accountable to engage in respectful and appropriate behavior.⁴²

Throughout its more than 30-year history, many of its graduates have lauded the program while recounting its value and ability to empower them to change their vision about how their life is ordered. The professors treated the inmates with respect and introduced them to biblical texts and theological principles that led them to modified behaviors. Julio Medina, for example, personifies this concept. Medina obtained his MPS degree and, after leaving Sing Sing, continued this theological initiative that led to an M.Div. degree offered at NYTS. Medina shared, “pursuing a seminary degree while incarcerated turned my life around. It said to me that I was more than a drug dealer. I was a human being with a lot to give. It brought me a God who was not remote.”⁴³ Medina’s Christian and theological education landed him a position as executive director in a not-for-profit organization that assists formerly incarcerated individuals to adjust to the outside world.⁴⁴

Sean Pica is yet another formerly incarcerated person who validates the transformative aspects of a theological education. Pica reports that, completing his MPS degree at Sing Sing afforded him the opportunity to obtain gainful employment. Pica adds, “They (the inmates) think no one will hire them. But when I got out, after 16 years of incarceration, my education enabled me to immediately find a job in social services. Then we go back into the prisons, and show the men that there is hope.”⁴⁵ These graduates divulge how they benefited from their

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Emilie Babcox, “Maximum- Security Seminary.”: 8.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 9.

willingness to commit to studying scripture and aspects of theology; they were uplifted because of the change in how they perceived themselves as well as others.

The Sing Sing inmates were not the only ones who understood the value of the NYTS MPS program. Rev. Dr. Edward L. Hunt, who was the director of the program, and a chaplain for more than thirty years, believed the program was, and continues to be, beneficial to the inmates and everyone connected to them. From Dr. Hunt's perspective, to witness the inmates voluntarily overcome challenges and opt for positive changes was significant.⁴⁶ Even the NYTS board members understood the merits of the NYTS MPS program at the Sing Sing Facility. As Rabbi Douglas Krantz, an NYTS board member, acknowledged, "The program is really a positive, a positive force in a very difficult environment. None of us can really imagine it. How do you find your way in that darkness? That these guys can find something positive, can find a way out of that darkness—this to me is worthy of great admiration and respect."⁴⁷ Rabbi Krantz and Dr. Hunt acknowledged and confirmed the MPS students' accomplishments based on their willingness to discover spiritual principles, embrace Christian/theological education and then transform negative attitudes and behaviors—all while simultaneously living as an inmate in this facility.

The New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) also recognize and support the NYTS MPS program. In a recent NYTS article that featured a story about the program, Brian Fischer, former Commissioner of New York State's Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, has cited the degree program as being a significant factor in reducing violence and contributing to the process of rehabilitation in the State's

⁴⁶ Ibid., 7.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 9.

corrections system. Mr. Fischer stated, “Graduates serve in facilities throughout the State as chaplain assistants, peer counselors, or teachers.”⁴⁸ Former Commissioner Fischer’s comments express the DOCCS leadership’s appreciation for NYTS MPS and describe how it became a valuable commodity to them and to the MPS students. According to Commissioner Fischer, the MPS graduates became a resource to the DOCCS staff: their MPS education provided the inmates with spiritual and theological tools that enabled them to share with other inmates. In this way they became able and willing to assist other inmates who need personal counseling or spiritual guidance. In addition, the graduates display a level of conduct through their work with facility chaplains and the instructors that demonstrate they model appropriate behavior that the prison staff advocates and welcomes.

The primary stakeholders, DOCCS and NYTS, added strength and validity to the program through their endorsement and recognition of its potential to produce a reduction in the recidivism rate. In support of their claim, reliable data reveals that the recidivism rate is exceedingly low. For example, a 2006 study revealed that during the past five years, a rate of eleven percent during the entire life of the program and close to zero for those who have been released in the past five years. This recidivism rate in the New York State general prison system during that same time was 49%, a substantial difference.⁴⁹ These results tell a story of achievement that must not go unnoticed or be discounted; the NYTS MPS program at Sing Sing Correctional Facility establishes how important, useful, and transformative obtaining a Christian/theological education can be for men in prison. The reduced recidivism rate is an

⁴⁸ New York Theological Seminary, NYTS:Re-envisioning Theological Education for the 21st Century, discussing the Masters in Professional Studies Program, (accessed in Fall 2016).

⁴⁹ New York Theological Seminary. NYTS Testimony on MPS program at Sing Sing Correctional Facility. www.nyts.edu/.../testimony-submitted-to-the-nys-assembly-standing-committee-on-co. November 29, 2012. (accessed December 30,2016).

operational definition of the outcome. The inmates gained new skills and insights while studying biblical texts, learning multiple levels of theology and interacting with their professors. The lessons learned enabled them to achieve new levels of spiritual growth and sustainable behavior modifications.

For almost thirty-five years, the Master of Professional Studies program at Sing Sing has yielded and continues to demonstrate positive benefits that justify its existence. This long-term endeavor has proved, beyond doubt, its overwhelming value to the recipients and all of its stakeholders, i.e., the DOCCS leadership, correction officers, and the NYTS professors and administrators. Its emphasis on theological and Christian doctrines suggests that women who are currently or previously incarcerated, would benefit, and most likely enjoy even greater levels of individual and organizational success.

Historically, educators nor researchers have focused on providing access to education or services to women in prison. Barbara H. Zaitzow, a criminal justice professor, reports, “Invisibility is a fact of life for women in prison. All too often when we envision an inmate behind bars, we see a male face. The reality is quickly changing, however as prison inmates are increasingly female.”⁵⁰ As Professor Zaitzow asserts, women do not fit the profile of a prison inmate, little has been done to address their needs while they are incarcerated. Moreover, although females are entering the prison system at a faster rate than males, their issues are not addressed in the same manner as the larger population. Professors Alfred and Chlup support Zaitzow’s statement in their report; since 2000, women have been entering prison at a much

⁵⁰ Barbara H. Zaitzow, “Empowerment Not Entrapment: Providing Opportunities for Incarcerated Women to Move Beyond quoted from “Doing Time.” *Justice Policy Journal. The Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice*, (Spring 2006).

faster rate than men; their rate has increased by 33% in one decade.⁵¹ Alfred and Chlup assert that, “While a 33% increase in under a decade may seem shocking, this figure seems mild when one learns that women’s imprisonment in the United States has seen a 2,800% increase from 1970 to 2001.”⁵² Based upon these educators’ findings, women, for more than thirty years, have been and continue to outpace men and is the fastest growing population entering the prison system. This data, coupled with the knowledge that the plight of incarcerated women mostly unseen or ignored, indicates the need for more thought and research to address the growing concerns and issues that this group generates.

In recent years, a group of researchers and advocates directed their attention to identifying and assessing educational needs and opportunities for incarcerated females. In September of 2001, the Leslie Glass Foundation and the Open Society Institute funded a collaborative research initiative at the Graduate Center of the City of New York and Women in Prison at the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility. The project was entitled “*Changing Minds: The Impact of College in a Maximum Security Prison*.⁵³” Several educators, researchers, incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women examined the effects of providing onsite college education to this population. Their report built the case that providing college educational opportunities to this group has significant and long term value. Leslie Glass of the Leslie Glass Foundation, one of the funders for this initiative, acknowledges a central theme that one may observe about the impact of this initiative. She suggests, “Educators everywhere know a simple

⁵¹ Mary V. Alfred and Dominique T. Chlup, “Neoliberalism, Illiteracy, and Poverty: Framing the Rise in Black Women’s Incarceration”, *The Western Journal of Black Studies*, (2009): 241.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ M Fine, M.E. Torre, K. Boudin, I Bowen, J. Clark, D. Hylton, M. Martinez, Missy, R. A. Roberts, P. Smart, & D. Upequi, “*Changing Minds: The Impact of College in a Maximum- Security Prison*,” (New York: The Graduate School and University Center, City University of New York, September, 2001): 44.

truth: learning brings about transformations of many kinds. It helps to equip people for a better life wherever that life may be led. With this study on the impact of education behind bars, the women of Bedford have given legislators, judges, the media, and the general public real data to reveal that education makes a difference, and all of society benefits by each new person who receives it.”⁵⁴ Ms. Glass’ statement implies that it is common knowledge that access to a college education not only rewards and benefits the person in college, it rewards and benefits everyone connected to the individual. This author includes incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women in her claim; she believes women in prison, particularly the women in Bedford Hills, can also receive positive returns and advantages from a college education.

Bedford Hills, a maximum security prison for women, is located in Westchester County, New York. While the *Changing Minds* research project was under development, the entire population count at BHCF was approximately 650 women who were serving an average sentence of 8 1/3 years. Most of these women were mothers and most were from New York City and its immediate surroundings. These women range in age from 16-75; with a demographic breakdown of 52% Black, 29% Latino, 16% White, and the remaining 3% Native or Asian American.⁵⁵ In 1997, BHCF re-opened its onsite college program, which had been closed since 1994 when President Clinton signed the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, which denied access to Pell grants for incarcerated women and men. This new law allowed states, including New York State, to halt funding for onsite college programs in correctional facilities.⁵⁶ In 1997, “college-in- prison was reintroduced by a consortium of private colleges

⁵⁴ Fine, “Changing Minds”: iv.

⁵⁵ Ibid.,7.

⁵⁶ Ibid.,1.

and universities, active community members, and the Correctional Facility Superintendent together with a dedicated inmate Committee.”⁵⁷ Apparently these diverse entities, including the DOC and the female inmates, collaborated together, assessed the benefits of providing incarcerated men and women onsite access a to college education, and decided to resume the educational pursuits for women at the facility. Subsequently, this *Changing Minds* report documented and examined the outcomes of BHCF women who participated in the program between 1997 and 2000.

The *Changing Minds* research yielded several findings. A key takeaway from the study indicates that over the 3-year span of the study, female college inmates had lower recidivism rates. The actual data revealed that less than 10% returned to prison while almost 30% of the non-participants returned. The chart below illustrates actual results of the DOC study.⁵⁸

EDUCATION STATUS	RETURN STATUS	NUMBER	36 MONTH RE-INCARCERATION RATE
INMATES WITH NO COLLEGE (N=2,031)	NO RETURN TO NYSDOCS RETURNED TO NYSDOCS TOTAL	1423 608 2031	70.1% 29.9%
INMATES WHO PARTICIPATED IN COLLEGE-IN-PRISON (N=274)	NO RETURN TO NYSDOCS RETURNED TO NYSDOCS TOTAL	263 21 274	92.3% 7.7%

Another finding from the *Changing Minds* project concluded, “Interviews with prison administrators, corrections officers, women in prison, and college faculty confirm that the presence of a college program alters the prison environment by rendering it safer, more

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

manageable and with fewer disciplinary incidents.”⁵⁹ Thus, attending the “college-in-prison” program at BHCF not only established benefits for the female participants, the program yielded favorable results for all stakeholders. To further support this notion two experienced administrators acknowledge the value of onsite college programs in prisons. Elaine Lord, who was BHCF Superintendent during the Changing Minds project, asserts, “[College] opens the door to viable alternatives to cycles of criminal behavior and further incarceration. Within the prison it can be a positive management tool motivating women to change.” Then, George W. Webber, Professor of Urban Ministry, President Emeritus, New York Theological Seminary, states, “I cannot stress enough how powerful a factor college has been in maintaining peace and well-being in prisons.”⁶⁰ From their disparate vantage points and statements, Lord and Webber confirm that this college program for inmates is a viable and integral initiative.

College professors and corrections officers agree that inmates who have access to a college education attain a level of respect and internalize a sense of self worth. One such professor stated that, in her classroom, students discipline each other. “I think in my Bedford classes; these are the only places I’ve ever taught where other students have cooperated in disciplining somebody who gets out of hand. I’ve never experienced that...with such wisdom.”⁶¹ Another professor weighs in, “It takes time for the women to take away their masks. Their voices should be heard because many of these young women and older women have never had an occasion to speak and be heard. Initially, there’s a shyness and reticence; then they learn that their lives have been valuable and unique, and there’s a dignity within themselves that they

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Fine, “Changing Minds”: 21.

⁶¹ Ibid., 22.

could hold on to.”⁶² In each statement from the BHCF “college-in-prison”, professors acknowledge their support and value for the onsite college program and for the women in the program. The professors appear to appreciate the female inmates’ desire to learn and their willingness to respect classroom protocol.

Correction officers at BHCF provided similar support for the college-in-prison program. In the *Changing Minds* report, this group stated that the female inmates became reserved and removed when the college program was denied. Their energy and morale seemed to diminish. However, once the college program resumed, the prison environment returned to its optimism for the program. One correction officer shared his understanding of the improvement as, “Maturity! Maturity! They’re more mature because they are learning and they have something to occupy their time and they have less time to explore other activities.”⁶³ Yet another officer asserts, “I mean to a point where we don’t have to worry about the stabbings, the fighting within the facility. College gives them something else to occupy their time and their minds. The more educated the women are, the better they can express themselves and the easier it is to manage them. The better educated women can take better care of themselves within the facility.”⁶⁴ For the correction officers, the BHCF college-in-prison program has been a valuable source of assistance because it reinforces and escalates appropriate behaviors in the population thus, significantly reducing inappropriate actions.

⁶² Ibid., 24.

⁶³ Ibid., 22.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 21.

Several women who participated in the BHCF college-in-prison program provided their insight and opinions to the *Changing Minds* research project. Each woman shared how they benefitted from the BHCF college program and what it meant to them on a personal level.

Denise, mother of three, college student reports, “When I first came to Bedford Hills, I was a chronic disciplinary problem, getting tickets back to back. I had a very poor attitude as well, I was rude and obnoxious for no reason, I did not care about anything or anyone. Then I became motivated to participate in a number of programs, one of which was college. I started to care about getting in trouble and became conscious of the attitude I had that influenced my negative behaviors...College is a form of rehabilitation, one of the best.”⁶⁵

Francine, college senior, states, “Education softens you too. It’s made me soften. I think about things more. I appreciate things more. People. Their feelings. And it made me feel differently about the crime. Before I was stupid. I had that thug mentality. That street thing. That hard thing. But now, you can do anything to me, and I’m not going to react like that. I’m not going there.”⁶⁶

Then there’s **Sarah, college student, has served 8 years at BHCF**. She describes her college experience in what seems to be a more expressive fashion. Sarah reveals: “Because when you take somebody who feels that they’re not going to amount to anything... and you put them in an environment... like, **when you’re in college it takes you away from the prison**, you know what I’m saying? I can’t really find the words, but it’s like, you’re **opening your mind to a whole different experience**. But you’re still in prison, but once you’re in that class it’s like you’re not in prison, you know? You’re here getting an education. You know so much. It’s like, **things that you never even thought that you would learn**...I didn’t know anything about India and China and the opium war... And it took me to go to Bedford, to go to Mercy College, to take up that class in order for me to learn that, you know what I’m saying? I didn’t know about Sigmund Freud, none of that! But reading the books and writing...I’m telling you, it was just so amazing for me, I was like bugged out, because I... I never would’ve known. To me, [College] puts you on a higher level. It broadens your way of thinking, you know? **And it’s** something that you could use for the rest of your life.”⁶⁷

Lastly, there is **Rose, college graduate, serving 25 years to life**. She recounts her college experience succinctly, yet conveys a lot. Rose states, “And that’s what happens in here, in this very dark place. We are educated. We go to college and we

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 26.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 31.

learn new things. And we have a lot of confidence. Not only our self-esteem, but we even have something to offer others.”⁶⁸

All of these BHCF college-in-prison students express gratitude for having access to a college education while still incarcerated. Each acknowledges ways in which the college experience afforded them opportunities for personal internal growth, which then led to a positive self assessment—all culminating with changes in attitude and behaviors toward self and toward others.

The BHCF women’s stories, combined with the comments from the correction officers, professors, and DOC administrators, comprise a high level of support for providing incarcerated women access to such an education. Statements from all of these stakeholders make the claim that the onsite college-in-prison program at BHCF reveals a low recidivism rate, decreases levels of conflict, and increases respect and supportive interactions. However, a negative aspect or challenge in the academic scenario is noted. That challenge was funding. As mentioned earlier, with no State or Federal aid to assist, its’ advocates needed to become creative fundraisers.

Changing Minds researchers report, “A strong alliance emerged between three communities: the prison community including administration, staff and inmates; the Westchester and metropolitan New York City community, including hundreds of citizens committed to the return of college and responsible for equipping the Learning Center with staff, desks, files, computers and books, and the academic community, led by President Regina Peruggi of Marymount Manhattan, which served as the degree granting institution.”⁶⁹ This strong alliance presented the opportunity for several diverse communities to collaborate with the primary objective to generate sufficient

⁶⁸ Ibid., 23.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 6.

financial support that would enable restoration of the program at BHCF. Today, Marymount Manhattan College remains a fixture at BHCF providing the female inmates opportunities to obtain an Associates of Arts degree in Social Sciences and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology.⁷⁰

The *Changing Minds* project assembled documentation that conveyed the value of allowing female inmates access to higher education while in prison. The BHCF original college-in-prison program and the current Marymount Manhattan (BHCP) program acknowledge that onsite college programs in correctional institutions can be synonymous with life changing opportunities for incarcerated females. The *Changing Minds* project yielded results that can be used in arguments that support female inmates can be transformed positively as a result of academic advancement in similar ways that male inmates have demonstrated through their involvement with NYTS MPS program at the Sing Sing Correctional Facility. Although Marymount Manhattan College BHCP has a liberal arts educational focus and NYTS MPS program at Sing Sing has a Christian/theological orientation, both prison programs are characterized collectively as important assets to all stakeholders.

At Emory University, Candler School of Theology further symbolizes the claim that providing higher education to female inmates, specifically theological education, yields significant benefits. To support its claim, in 2009, the school housed its Certificate in Theological Studies (CTS) program at Metro State Prison, which is located outside of Atlanta, GA. This program's duration is one year and provides theological education for incarcerated women. It is delivered by professors from four theological schools: Candler School of Theology, McAfee School of Theology at Mercer University, the Interdenominational Theological Center

⁷⁰ Academics: Bedford Hills College Program: Marymount Manhattan. <http://www.mmm.edu/academics/bedford-hills-college-program.php> (Accessed December 30- January 8, 2017).

and Columbia Theological Seminary.⁷¹ Their involvement confirms their commitment to invest their time, energy and talent to incarcerated women and suggests that these seminaries recognize the value a theological education can provide. Candler's statement that, "The Certificate enables incarcerated women to practice and further develop academic skills, thus keeping them mentally active and preparing them for spiritual leadership and further education upon release", gives credence to this notion. Moreover, "Throughout their studies, incarcerated students, (1) develop critical thinking, reading and writing skills; (2) develop familiarity with basic scriptural, theological and ethical concepts; and (3) reflect on the implications of their studies for the prison context and their own vocational development."⁷² Thus, the CTS program allows the female inmates the opportunity to expand their analytical capacity through critical thought and increase their biblical and theological knowledge base.

CTS students acknowledge that participation in the program has empowered them to strengthen their sense of self-worth and self-image; they have gained more patience, a new resolve and hope for the future. Several women, who completed this program, have even created ministries within the Metro prison.⁷³ They report changes in their outlook regarding their own lives and in their behaviors towards others. A CTS student reports, "The theology program has shown me that hope is still alive and that I still possess the ability to prove that I am human. Labels on anyone can be notoriously misleading and unforgiving things. But no matter the label attached to me, I have the capacity and the unstoppable desire to accomplish something positive and to have a lasting impact." Yet another CTS student reveals, "In my five years of

⁷¹ Candler School of Theology .candler.emory.edu/programs-resources/institutes.../certificate-theological-studies.html (Accessed, January 2, 2017).

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

incarceration, I have never felt important. I have found an area of study through theology that interests me and springs forth a hope that would otherwise be dormant. Through theology, I am heard, I am a woman, a mother, a theologian, And I am proud! What better way to use my time than strengthen my spirit and my faith.” An additional student describes her CTS experience in a more introspective manner. She asserts, “I never thought I had a theological voice. Nor did I think anyone would be interested in my perspective of what the Bible says. This course has helped me to develop my voice and realize that I had one.”⁷⁴ The CTS women’s experiences in onsite theological education convey that spiritual enhancement created opportunities for positive attitude and behavioral changes that they did not possess nor realize prior to participating in the CTS program.

CTS professors echo similar sentiments regarding the significance and benefits of the CTS program. **One CTS instructor states**, “the road from San Jose, California, to Arrendale State Prison, Georgia, is a long and strange tale, one that cannot be explained by a series of coincidences. How I came to teach here at the prison is a deep, unprecedented mystery, one whose source lies not within my own self, but only something as wonderful and grace-filled as God’s guiding presence. The road has indeed been strange, but a classroom of new friends awaited me at the destination. For that I am eternally grateful.” (David Ranzolin, Elective Instructor; MTS 2013). **Another CTS professor**, James Thomas, Elective Instructor MTS 2013 **asserts**, “the opportunity to teach literature and theology at Arrendale has been incredible. It has granted me the chance to share pieces of literature that are dear to me, and more importantly, it has afforded me the opportunity to learn from the various interpretations of students. I can honestly say that my own theological positions have been challenged and changed by my

⁷⁴ Ibid.

experience here, and I have my students to thank for that.⁷⁵ Both professors express their support and acknowledge the value the CTS program has brought to them as well as the female inmates.

In many ways, the female inmates who participate in the CTS program offer a similar statement that the male inmates in the NYTS MPS program generate. They convey that access to a Christian/theological education can be as important and rewarding to incarcerated women as it has been to incarcerated men. Creating opportunities for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women to learn and study biblical and theological principles creates transformative outcomes that can have potentially positive effects in all areas of a female's life. In essence, obtaining theological/Christological education opens one's ability to connect current and previously incarcerated females to a loving, welcoming, and supportive God, which then creates pathways to increased spirituality.

RESEARCH - QUESTION #2 - BIBLICAL/THEOLOGICAL

What biblical significance does the Gospel of Luke 4:18 (NRSV) provide to the value of offering incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women access to Christian/theological education? How do Womanist Theology and Jürgen Moltmann combine with the biblical texts to provide theological support for this project?

One scripture, that appropriately relates and underscores the overall importance and Christological significance of allowing incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women access to Christian/theological education is found in the Gospel of Luke 4:18-19. Many scholars believe that the same person authored the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles (the Book of Acts). Both open with a prologue to "Theophilus", defined as "God Lover". Theophilus is generally unknown, however, Luke's greeting to him in both the Gospel of Luke and in the Book

⁷⁵ Ibid.

of Acts suggests Theophilus is wealthy and is knowledgeable of the Christian movement.⁷⁶

These scholars believe, also, that Theophilus was learned and, because of Luke's greeting to him in both prologues, he was most likely a person of distinction. These critics suggest that the name Theophilus could be a descriptive name referring to a group of people.⁷⁷ Professor Luke Timothy Johnson acknowledges additional reasons to assume that the Luke-Acts author is one writer. He states, "Herein also is the real significance of hearing Luke-Acts as a single witness. In a single vision, Luke grasps the meaning of Jesus and the church for the world, and he tells that story so that what happens with Jesus foreshadows the church's experience and what happens in the church finds meaning as the continuation of Jesus' story."⁷⁸ Professor Johnson characterizes Luke –Acts as an expansion of the same theme and as books in the Bible that rely on each other for validation. Luke, because he uses scholarly language, is regarded as an educated person from an elite background; education was not accessible to most people in the lower classes.⁷⁹ Some scholars believe that Luke was a physician, others believe he was an historian. Professor Sharon H. Ringe defends Luke's historian, theologian characterization stating, "In the ancient world being a historian meant not someone interested principally in factual accuracy, but rather someone committed to moral instruction through a recounting of events and deeds from the past."⁸⁰ Thus, Professor Ringe believes that Luke, rather than focus on the facts of his writings, intended to convey to his audience his interpretation of what he

⁷⁶ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament, Third Edition*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), 188.

⁷⁷ Sharon H. Ringe, "Good News to the Poor for the Non-Poor", in *The New Testament –Introducing the Way of Discipleship*, ed. Wes Howard- Brook & Sharon H. Ringe, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002): 63-64.

⁷⁸ Johnson, *Writings of the New Testament*, 190.

⁷⁹ Ringe, "Good News to the Poor", 63.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

understood to be God's real message through his account of Jesus' life. Scholars suggest that Luke's intended audience is the Christian community of believers who were thought to be mostly Gentile Christians. The scholars acknowledge that Jewish people were possibly in attendance.⁸¹

As stated previously, Luke 4:18-19 conveys significant biblical, theological and Christological supportive messages to current and formerly incarcerated women. It states,

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because
he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and
recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed, go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

The first observation about Luke in this biblical text, is that he reveals Jesus' connection with the Old Testament and the Hebrew Bible in general. In the Gospel of Luke 4:18-19, the narrative depicts Jesus as he begins his sermon in Nazareth reading from a scroll that includes verses taken from Isaiah 61:1-2 (NRSV),

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news
to the oppressed,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
to proclaim the year of the LORD's
favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn.

Professor Mitchell G. Reddish explains, "The text from Isaiah that Jesus reads (Isa 61:1-2) is a summation of His own ministry. The reader should note the appropriateness of the Isaianic text to Luke's portrayal of Jesus with emphasis on the "Spirit of the Lord" and the work of God that brings good news to the poor, release to the captives, sight to the blind, and freedom from

⁸¹ Johnson, *Writings of the New Testament*, 192-193.

the oppressed. As we will see in the remainder of the Gospel, the Lukan Jesus is greatly concerned for the poor, the oppressed, and all the marginalized in society.”⁸² In Professor Reddish’s estimation, Luke is not only linked to aspects of Judaism, he also focuses on Jesus’ ministry towards, in Jesus’ world, those who are in need or whom society has basically forgotten. In essence, Luke represents Jesus as open, concerned and supportive of the issues and needs of those who are less fortunate, which suggests that the primary targets of this dissertation would be the marginalized that would benefit from Jesus’ messages.

For many scholars, the Gospel of Luke is one of four gospels, namely, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John found in the New Testament known generically as the “Good News”; they are called the “Good News” because these four writers, for the most part, center their writings on the life, work, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.⁸³ The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke are also referred to as the “Synoptic” Gospels in the New Testament. “Synoptic” is defined as having similar viewpoints, and following the same order as it relates to Jesus’ life.⁸⁴ Thus, the Synoptic Gospels include similar stories about the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Some of their stories are arranged in the same manner and appear in the same time frame. However, there are other stories in each of the Synoptic Gospels that appear in different time frames or were not included at all. Professor Reddish provides an example of this literary grouping, when he asserts, “Matthew and Luke both contain sayings similar to those in Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount, not found in Mark, yet they have arranged them in their Gospels very differently.”⁸⁵

⁸² Mitchell G. Reddish, *An Introduction to The Gospels*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1997), 162-163.

⁸³ Ibid., 19.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 26.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 29.

Reddish reveals that Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is incorporated in the Gospel of Matthew (Matt: 5:7) and in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 6:17-46). The Gospel of Mark does not incorporate an account of the Sermon. For some reason, not stated and not substantiated, the author of the Gospel of Mark omits this story that many theologians and scholars consider to be one of the highlights of Jesus' numerous public speaking engagements. Reddish poses a possible argument for Mark's exclusion of the Sermon on the Mount story. Some believe the Gospel of Mark was written prior to the other two Synoptic Gospels. The acceptance and rationale for this information is that the Gospel of Matthew includes approximately 90 percent of Mark's Gospel and the Gospel of Luke includes approximately 50 percent of the same. Mark, on the other hand, has only three or four stories about Jesus that are not found in either of Matthew or Luke.⁸⁶ If the Gospel of Mark were the first Gospel written, then it establishes a valid rationale for why this Gospel does not contain the Sermon on the Mount. It is obvious that the stories that fed the narratives of the life of Jesus, in the Gospel of Mark, sourced the writings about Him from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. However, many scholars believe that Luke obtained his information from other sources. The prologue found in the beginning of the Gospel of Luke 1:1-4 (NRSV) supports this notion. It states,

1 Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, 2 just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were witnesses and servants of the word, 3 I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

Luke's own words in the prologue reveal that others before him apparently wrote and focused on Jesus Christ's life and his message. The prologue implies that Luke had access to these sources which he apparently utilized to create his narrative about Jesus' life. Because Luke and Matthew have parallels in their stories regarding Jesus' life, parallels of parables, types of sayings and even controversy stories, many scholars have accepted that both Luke and Matthew obtained material from a source identified with the symbol, "Q", which is derived from the German word "Quelle", which means source. It is believed that the "Q" source is a compilation of sayings and statements known to have been accessible through the early church.⁸⁷ Therefore, it suggests that Luke had access to the "Q" source when he wrote his Gospel.

It is theologian Sharon H. Ringe's notion that, Luke's prologue establishes that he was intentional and focused in his examination and study of all pertinent sources of information that referenced Jesus' life and message. Ringe asserts, Luke's overall purpose was to make certain his audience understood the reality and the importance of Jesus' message to the people.⁸⁸ Ringe, in agreement with Reddish states, " From this and other passages, it is clear that the heart of the Gospel, which is carried strongly in the traditions stemming from Jesus' own ministry, is a word of "good news" directed especially to those suffering from poverty and other consequences of imperial structures and policies."⁸⁹ Thus, from this biblical text, Luke 4:18-19, it is established through Jesus' first sermon in Nazareth that his objective and mission is to address the plight of the poor and marginalized of this world. Professor Ringe acknowledges "Luke's Gospel is often called the "Gospel of the poor" because he writes about the poor and other marginalized groups

⁸⁷ *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version With the Apocrypha.* (New York, NY: Oxford Press, 2010), 1744.

⁸⁸ Ringe, "Good News to the Poor for the Non-Poor", 63.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 64.

more directly and more often than the other Gospel writers.”⁹⁰ From Ms. Ringe’s vantage point, it appears that scholars view Luke’s depiction of Jesus as a defender and a supporter of the marginalized. Luke’s Jesus demonstrates love and concern to individuals the majority of society has cast out or with whom they have minimal contact. Here again, this suggests that Jesus exhibited love and support to individuals who are part of the marginalized in society; he would be concerned with their issues and needs.

Professor Luke Timothy Johnson asserts that Luke’s message includes more than just “good news” to the poor, he argues that Luke’s narrative, especially verses located in Luke 4:16-30, not only reveals Jesus’ “good news” message, it characterizes Jesus work as prophetic in nature with compelling and potentially divisive components. For example, Johnson states, “In Luke’s Sermon on the Plain, (6:17- 49), Jesus proclaims both blessings and woes (6:20-26). The programmatic prophesy of 4:18 is fulfilled here as the Messiah brings “good news” to the poor, the hungry, those who weep, and those who are persecuted. In contrast, he pronounces woes for those who are rich, well fed, joyful, and approved by others.”⁹¹ Johnson’s comments acknowledge that in the Gospel of Luke, the writer conveys messages in which Jesus praises one group of people and negates another group. In Luke 4:18, Jesus expresses a high regard, positive outlook, and “good news” towards the poor and downtrodden. Yet, two chapters later, in Luke 6:24-26, in what many scholars call the Sermon on the Plain, Jesus says nothing affirming about the people who are well off. In fact, in these scriptures, Jesus admonishes the rich and well-to-do. These biblical texts, found in Luke’s narrative, emanating from Jesus, provide hope and joy

⁹⁰ Ibid., 65.

⁹¹ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament, Third Edition*. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010, 202.

to one segment of the population while simultaneously rejecting another segment. It should be noted that many scholars characterize Luke's account of Matthew's Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:1-7:29) as the Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:24-26). While Luke's version includes features of Matthew's version, it is briefer and is directed mostly to the poor, oppressed and ignored. Moreover, Luke's Sermon on the Plain includes Jesus' instructions to his disciples to display love to people, to avoid criticism of others and to demonstrate spiritual involvement.⁹²

Professor Ringe expands Professor Johnson's depiction of Luke narratives to include more than simply a message for the poor. She maintains that, "the 'non-poor' receive in this Gospel a message that challenges their place of privilege and exhorts them to challenge their lives accordingly."⁹³ Ringe suggests that, in Luke's narrative, Jesus admonishes the privileged that being well-off is not deemed favorably. He expresses his desire for people with means to rethink how they interact and relate to individuals who are not so fortunate. In Professor Ringe's assessment, Jesus delivers a dual message to his audience which one may interpret as divisive and controversial because it highlights spiritual benefits for a single segment of the population, namely the poor and marginalized.

The potentially controversial messages found within the Gospel of Luke contribute to the reasons Luke 4:16-30 is called the "Rejection at Nazareth". It is so-called because initially the audience received, overwhelmingly, (Luke 4:18-19) Jesus' message of *good news* to the poor. However, several verses later (Luke 4: 25-30), when Jesus told stories from the Old Testament recalling how Elijah helped the widow at Zarephath and cleansed Naaman the Syrian, His audience became angry. In fact, their displeasure drove them to thoughts of murdering Jesus.

⁹² Reddish, *An Introduction to the Gospels*:164.

⁹³ Ringe: 65.

Professor Reddish divulges his assessment of Jesus' followers change of heart towards Him. He asserts,

Initially impressed and amazed by the teachings of Jesus, the crowd turns against him when he interprets his mission in universal terms. The point of his statements about the widow in Sidon and Naaman the Syrian, characters from the Hebrew Bible, is that God's grace was extended to non- Israelites. Jesus has just announced that the time for the fulfillment of God's promises was now. Expecting that they will be the recipients of these blessings, the people are incensed when Jesus declares that God's promises are open to people who are not Israelites.⁹⁴

If we accept Reddish's analysis, the people that listened to Jesus speak in Nazareth had several reasons to reject Him. First, they were apparently displeased that Jesus acknowledged two prophets from the Old Testament who demonstrated care and concern for persons labelled as outcasts and different. Next, they believed that God's message of love, care and support was for them only because they were the only beneficiaries of God's love and care.

Luke Timothy Johnson agrees with Reddish's argument as he presents yet another explanation for the Nazarenes' change of heart about Jesus' message. Johnson states, "His townspeople at first hear him gladly, but they turn against him when he compares himself to Elijah and Elisha (Luke 4:25-27). The reason is that they were prophets through whom God worked salvation for those *outside* the historical people of Israel. The townspeople represent those Jews who do not accept a prophet who offers God's 'visitation' to anyone but themselves."⁹⁵ For Johnson, the crowd in Nazareth was not pleased that Jesus identified with two Old Testament prophets who assisted people from a community outside of their own. Both Reddish and Johnson concur that Luke's narrative (4:16-30), at first, elicited positive reactions from the Nazareth crowd, then their responses became negative, dangerous and, thus, potentially

⁹⁴ Reddish, 163.

⁹⁵ Johnson, 202.

harmful reactions towards Jesus. The source of the negativity and the potential danger was derived from Luke's depiction of Jesus' willingness to demonstrate love and grace to other communities of people. In essence, Jesus applied, and actually represented the same biblical and theological principle that Elijah and Elisha conveyed in the Old Testament. The two prophets convey that God's grace is not only available to one group or one set of people, it is open to all of His people—even those who are outside the proverbial mainstream.

In Luke's Rejection Narrative in Chapter 4:16-30, his message of love and grace possibly angered the Nazareth crowd because of its inclusiveness of diverse people, however, Luke informs his audience of the importance Jesus places on addressing the needs of the downtrodden and marginalized people. New Testament Professor and scholar, John T. Carroll, states "in this topsy-turvy world of God's sovereign rule, as Jesus proclaims and enacts it, God's grace comes to the marginalized. Jesus surprises and provokes by welcoming the sick, and sinful, the poor and excluded, the lost and least in Israel, into the festive company of the people of God."⁹⁶ Professor Carroll acknowledges that Jesus, in spite of the negative reaction, appears to be intentional in conveying to individuals, who typically believe they do not matter, that indeed they do matter and God's grace extends also to them. Jesus' message of the availability of God's love, support and grace to the outcasts and the forgotten was in many ways a radical and bold statement. It was a bold and radical message because it expressed a new and different cultural, social, and political norm for first century people living in Nazareth. In Professor Carroll's opinion, the entire story and biblical message in the Gospel of Luke relates to the availability of

⁹⁶ John T. Carroll, "Welcoming Grace, Costly Commitment, An Approach to the Gospel of Luke" . *Interpretation*, (2003):17.

God's grace. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus' messages challenge authority and deeply rooted customs, nevertheless, welcomes everyone to God's circle.⁹⁷

Professor Carroll clearly depicts that Luke's narrative reveals that God's grace, love and support extends to everyone, even if people are at odds with God's decision. Thus, the biblical and spiritual significance of Luke 4:18-19 to women with a prison background is that Jesus' "good news" does not exclude them. Luke's biblical text (4:18-19) expresses the value and love Jesus has for the poor and outcasts of society, regardless of their past behaviors. Connecting to Jesus' message that God's love and grace exist for everyone can send a message to incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women an incentive and an opportunity to establish a personal relationship with God/Jesus. Building an affirming personal relationship with God will allow women to grow spiritually and, potentially lead to opportunities that enable positive changes in their lives. Also, Luke's narrative and focus on Jesus' "Good News" message has the capability to break down barriers for people who believe they cannot be aligned with God's community of believers because of their past negative behaviors and or experiences. As Carroll stated, God's grace is for all people-no one is left out.

For theologian Paul Tillich, God's grace becomes a reality and a viable option when individuals make a decision to change their attitude and acknowledge that their past nor their lineage can prevent them from receiving grace. Tillich avows,

It strikes us when, year after year, the longed for perfection of life does not appear, when the old compulsions reign within us as they have for decades, when despair destroys all joy and courage. Sometimes at that moment a wave of light breaks into our darkness and it is as though a voice was saying: 'You are accepted, you are accepted, accepted by that which is greater than you, and the name of which you do not know. Do not ask for the name now, perhaps you will find it later.... Simply accept the fact that you are accepted!' If that happens to us, we

⁹⁷ Ibid., 23.

experience grace.⁹⁸

After spending a great deal of time and energy living an emotionally challenging and draining existence, one can obtain God's grace, simply or instantly, when she or he makes the decision to change their understanding of whom God is and whom they are to God.

Tillich is saying that once a person takes the risk to establish a relationship with God by reading the biblical texts and trust in God, then grace is attainable. Therefore, for marginalized people who have been ignored and/or forgotten, such as incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women, what becomes attainable is the capability to forget past mistakes, forget what others think of them, even forget what they may have thought about themselves, in the realization that God's grace and God's love invites them to establish a real relationship with Him. According to Tillich, acknowledging grace in one's life opens the opportunity and motivation to accept others. Tolerating others then becomes easier because the individual comes to the realization that the God that provides grace and love for them is the same God who bestows grace and love towards others.⁹⁹ The knowledge gained from studying the biblical texts and growing spiritually, claims Tillich, have the potential to empower the women and their stakeholders. Through increased belief in God's spiritual principles, the women gain the opportunity to interact respectfully and graciously with each other. They are placed in a position to value and reaffirm Tillich's opinion that God's grace and love are available to all the women.

Womanist theologian and Professor Yolanda Y. Smith proclaims that studying the Bible, obtaining a Christian education, and exploring other progressive theologies contributes to a

⁹⁸ Paul Tillich, *The Shaking of the Foundations* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940): 162.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

woman's spiritual understanding.¹⁰⁰ To define Womanist Theology, Smith uses a definition from noted womanist theologian and professor Delores Williams, which states, "Womanist theology attempts to help Black women, see, affirm and have confidence in the importance of their experience and faith for determining the character of the Christian religion in the African American community. Womanist theology opposes all oppressions based on race, sex, class, sexual preference, physical disability and caste."¹⁰¹ Professors Smith and Williams propose that Womanist theology supports and embraces all aspects of women's existence, especially Black women's lives. Womanist Theology is also committed to addressing the needs of all women and other marginalized individuals. Thus, this specific theology is concerned with issues that affect all people who are treated unfairly. Additionally, Womanist theology is intentional in assisting women to gain an awareness of the spiritual and personal principles they bring to and learn from a Christian education.

Through the womanist theologian lens, Smith suggests that obtaining a Christian education can also empower women. Here, the Professor describes an empowering experience by channeling theologian Howard Thurman's grandmother. To illustrate her claim, she states, "In this regard, Thurman's grandmother critiqued the Bible in light of her experience and embraced aspects of the scriptures that were liberating and inspiring, but rejected those teachings that were used as tools of oppression. In a similar fashion, Christian education can engage Black women in a 'hermeneutic of suspicion' that will empower them to identify liberating systems and practices while resisting those oppressive to women and other marginalized

¹⁰⁰ Yolanda Y. Smith, "Womanist Theology: Empowering Black Women Through Christian Education", *Black Theology: An International Journal*, (May 2008): 206.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.,202-203.

persons.”¹⁰² According to Professor Smith, Thurman’s grandmother realized that she had the right and the ability to read and interpret the biblical texts. Next, she understood that she could decide which scriptures were spiritually uplifting and focus only on those supportive scriptures. Lastly, she grasped a key point: her assessment and choices of the parts of the Bible she chose to read, or not read did not obstruct or detract from her belief that she remained connected to God. Howard Thurman’s grandmother demonstrated what being empowered meant. She understood that, even though she was a former slave, she possessed the power and the ability to define her own relationship to the scriptures as well as her relationship to God. Thus, the definition of “hermeneutic of suspicion”, is realizing that you, the Black woman or any oppressed person, has the ability and the right, without worrying about losing God’s love, to read the Bible for their own understanding, then determine which scriptures offer love, support and encouragement.

Womanist theology conveys to incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women that utilizing a “hermeneutic of suspicion” when reading the Bible can be an empowering tool. For these women to recognize that they, too, are capable of choosing the biblical texts that are theologically and spiritually supportive, informs them that they can trust their judgment, which again is empowering.

Delores Williams, a noted Womanist theologian identifies additional theological and Christological benefits for women who connect to the biblical texts with the goal to establish a relationship with God/Jesus. Professor Williams deems that Jesus’ message in Luke 4 (also in Matthew and Mark) expresses God’s desire to heal all aspects of a person: mind, body, and spirit. Yet another message from Luke 4 reveals that God uses Jesus to deliver “life” to humankind, through an individual’s use of the biblical texts, to correct difficult and or

¹⁰² Ibid., 213.

problematic relationships within the body, mind, or spirit. This, according to Williams, is redemption, through the lens of a “*ministerial vision*.¹⁰³ In essence, Williams believes that developing an understanding of scripture may create opportunities for individuals to correct negative behaviors and/or attitudes, thus enabling new and positive ways of interacting with others. Professor Williams expands her argument regarding God’s meaning of redemption further when she asserts,

Redemption had to do with God, through the *ministerial vision*, giving humankind the ethical thought and practice upon which to build positive, productive quality of life. Hence, the kingdom of God theme in the *ministerial vision* of Jesus does not point to death; it is not something one has to die to reach. Rather the kingdom of God is a metaphor of hope God gives those attempting to right the relations between *self and self*, between *self and others*, between *self and God* as prescribed in the sermon on the mount, in the golden rule, and in the commandment to show love above all else.¹⁰⁴

Williams suggests that studying scriptures, such as Luke 4, opens a path for individuals to experience a relationship with God/Jesus, which can lead to transformative results through a connection to the scriptures. For incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women, internal transformation starts with self; it offers a chance for one to develop a “right relation” between *self and self*. Accepting and trusting the messages from the scriptures that God’s love and grace includes them, allows the women to change from a negative to positive perception of self. A change in the perception of self has the potential to lead to increased self- esteem and self- acceptance creating more possibilities to generate peace and comfort within oneself. To know that God welcomes diverse people, even people with a past, offers women a chance to develop “right relations” between *self and God*, thereby expanding their spiritual connection. This can be accomplished through creating times for prayer and meditation, reading the Bible, and attending

¹⁰³ Delores Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness, The Challenge of Womanist God – Talk*. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2006):164-165.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.,165-166.

church services (while incarcerated and, within community) and are significant inputs that can be used to establish internal transformation with a focus on adopting positive Christian characteristics.

On the other hand, external transformations can occur and become a viable reality to individuals when their spiritual relationship with God and God's word is enhanced. Making internal changes within oneself leads to opportunities to create positive relationships with others. For incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women, external "right relations" suggests that one relates differently with other people. To be open to obtaining new skills that encourage resisting negative reactions, to willingly control their emotions, to accept different opinions, and to demonstrate alternative methods in conflictual experiences, are examples of creating "right relations" between *self and others*. Family members, other inmates, and correctional staff benefit from the women's willingness change behaviors and attitudes towards others.

Theologian Delores Williams' argument regarding the transformative components found in the biblical texts, especially located in Luke 4, are in her estimation, aspects of God's *ministerial vision* and actual meaning of redemption. Williams claims these specific scriptures provide hope to individuals who read the biblical texts. For marginalized communities, which includes women with prison backgrounds, learning and studying God's affirming, loving and welcoming word conveys levels of hope, which then fuels opportunities for positive change to occur. The women, through their biblical studies, can begin to grasp and accept possibilities that perhaps would not exist in the absence of hope.

Noted theologian Jurgen Moltmann concurs, and adds, "Hope's statements of promise, however, must stand in contradiction to the reality which can at present be experienced. They do not result from experiences, but are the condition for the possibility of new experiences. They do

not seek to illuminate the reality which exists, but the reality which is coming. They do not seek to make a mental picture of existing reality, but to lead existing reality towards the promised and hoped for transformation.”¹⁰⁵ What makes hope contain and maintain value is its capacity to emotionally and psychologically overshadow any current situation with thoughts of upcoming possibilities. Hope can inspire incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women with thoughts and visions of positive options for the future; it has the potential to encourage and strengthen the women’s emotional state because of their belief that, through God and God’s word, their current situation can change for the better.

Moltmann suggests that hope is attainable through one’s faith in God. He states, “Hope is therefore the ‘inseparable companion’ of faith. Hope is nothing else than the expectation of those things which faith has believed to have been promised by God. Thus, faith believes God to be true, hope awaits the time when this truth will be manifested; faith believes that he is our Father, hope anticipates that he will ever show himself to be a Father towards us.”¹⁰⁶ Moltmann believes hope exists because faith in God exists. In his judgment, a person must first develop a relationship with God and maintain that relationship through connecting with the scriptures. Once that relationship with God is secured, faith is established thus, creating the opening for hope to occur. For incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women, it is the women’s relationship and trust in God and God’s word (found in the biblical texts) and their involvement in prayer, meditation and church services, that can expand their faith and solidify elements of hope in their lives. Their faith and hope in God has the potential to provide the women with increased peace

¹⁰⁵ Jurgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope, On the Ground and The Implications Of A Christian Eschatology*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993): 18.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 20.

and harmony. Even in the darkest of situations, because of their faith and hope through their established relationship with God, the women come to expect and see light in their future.

The Gospel of Luke 4:18-19 demonstrates biblical/theological support and justification of the spiritual and personal importance access to Christian/theological education can provide to these women who are shut off. In Luke 4:18-19, Jesus expresses a message that clarifies his reference to Isaiah 61:1-2 that he and God, Old Testament and New Testament, are committed to including marginalized individuals to God's love, grace, and support. The biblical and Christological message of inclusion, love, and support is doctrinally validated from the theological scholars identified in this document. These theological scholars affirm that establishing a relationship with God through comprehending the biblical texts increases one's faith which opens an opportunity for hope to be established. Thus, when these women, with criminal pasts, are given the opportunity to pursue a Christian/ theological education, they face the potential to increase their spiritual existence in ways that lead to positive transformations.

RESEARCH – QUESTION # 3 - SOCIOLOGICAL

What are the evidence-based best practices one needs to understand and utilize to effectively teach Christian education/theology to adult women from marginalized communities?

A necessary component that contributes to academic success in a Christian/theological curriculum is an educational setting that is populated with professors/instructors who are knowledgeable in two important areas. First, the curriculum must contain components that evidence understanding of the populations it serves as well as include crafted teaching practices that are aligned with the characteristics of that population. Secondly, the academic environment and the educators must be acutely aware of the unique information brought by the collective cultural experiences, then be prepared to develop and utilize the specific skill sets required to teach women in ministry and theological education.

Adult Education concepts, known as Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs, are acknowledged, effective models that support this type of curriculum, i.e., for adults who are either currently attending college for the first time, or who are returning students who have spent years outside the academic setting. In addition to targeting older and new adult students, ABE professionals recognize the unique demographics that most of their students bring to the learning environment. According to Dr. Sandra D. Bridwell, “ABE traditionally serves the economically disadvantaged, working poor, unemployed, welfare recipients, and homeless constituencies who are disproportionately represented by people of color, immigrants and women.”¹⁰⁷ Thus, ABE leaders typically expect that their students will be predominately poor and female who come from marginalized, underserved and often ignored communities. The ABE model is regarded as an adequate learning program for our subject population because its design incorporates an

¹⁰⁷ Sandra D. Bridwell, “A Constructive Developmental Perspective on the Transformative Learning of Adults Marginalized by Race, Class and Gender.” *Adult Education Quarterly*, (63 (2), (2010): 129.

awareness and understanding of the issues that potentially affect its students. So, it is Dr. Bridwell's assertion that ABE programs can provide marginalized students with opportunities to experience "Transformative Learning" in respectful, safe and supportive teaching environments. Transformative learning challenges students to examine their long held personal beliefs and ideologies and gain new and factual information which then open possibilities for emotional and physical change to occur.¹⁰⁸ In many ways, this learning style empowers marginalized individuals. It enables them, while they are in school, to challenge the foundation of their beliefs and ideas, especially those beliefs and ideas that limit their ability to learn and grow. Once the student acknowledges her value and realizes that she no longer has to consent to a negative and limiting belief system, she discovers that the freedom to change those negative systems becomes an empowering reality. In essence, this system of learning, Dr. Bridwell states, lays the foundation for students to feel connected, valued, and acknowledged, which motivates the students to accept that they, too, embody the capability to learn and grow educationally. This body of knowledge provides the building blocks that establishes the appropriateness and beneficial qualities that ABE curriculums/programs are able to provide to incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women.

This program provides value-added components that are enumerated in Professors Prins, Toso and Schafft's statement below:

Family literacy and adult basic educational programs more broadly play a crucial social function, providing low income women and men with a space to encounter others in similar situations and, in turn, to discover, as one practitioner puts it, "that they are not alone in this world." In this way, community based adult education organizations serve as "resource brokers", an institution that facilitates access to such resources as emotional support, expanded social networks, and relief from loneliness and emotional distress.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Bridwell, 130.

Professors Prins et al. explain that ABE programs allow the students to interact with other students in ways that may stimulate self-esteem and respect for others. So, it goes without saying, that students in ABE programs typically foster positive relationships in a safe and inviting community that promote mutual strength and support. Concurrently, these programs open opportunities for students to gain knowledge that is academic as well as personal in nature. One adult student concurs, stating that the ABE program that she attends contributes to adding structure to her day. In other words, she has established a routine that excites and energizes her, and each day, she looks forward to be in the company of her new peers.¹¹⁰ It is apparent that ABE programs create learning environments that engender respect and acceptance to its attendees. In this setting, a student's personal circumstances are not prerequisites for learning, instead ABE programs identify opportunities for students to confront those situations and find meaningful and responsible ways to resolve their issues. Ultimately, ABE programs are designed to provide appropriate learning experiences for women with prison backgrounds.

Proponents of the theological education discipline have begun to realize what the builders of ABE programs have long understood about the “Adult Learner”. As increased numbers of adults become interested in pursuing a ministry/theology education, theology professors must augment the professional skills that will enable them to teach a specific group of adult learners. Additionally, to create a supportive environment in the classroom, theology professors must acknowledge and appreciate the considerable amount of knowledge and varied experiences adult

¹⁰⁹ Esther Prins, Blaire Wilson Toso, Kai A. Schafft, “It Feels Like a Little Family to Me” Social Interaction and Support Among Women in Adult Education and Family Literacy”. *Adult Education Quarterly*, (August 2009): 348.

¹¹⁰ Prins, 342-343.

students bring to the classroom.¹¹¹ It appears that Professor Blair understands the significant messages conveyed to theology students when the students realize that their voice matters. Students who believe their input to biblical and theological class discussions are deemed important, by the instructor and their peers, oftentimes increase their comfort level and self-confidence to express their thoughts. Students from marginalized communities, such as incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women, are therefore able to build confidence while in theology classes where the professor creates space and invites their voice. Professor Blair extends this point through its relation to learning environments that are safe and welcoming. She asserts, “Respect for the learner’s knowledge helps to create a supportive learning environment. This fact is emphasized by adult educators. Learners themselves will often voice preference for instructors ‘who respect me.’ This includes, of course, courtesy and warmth.”¹¹² Blair informs how affirming respect is to adult learners, especially those learners who are unaccustomed to being treated with respect. The theology professor must offer a climate that conveys all are welcomed and appreciated in the class environment before engaging students in biblical or theological discussions. Respect and appreciation of students’ prior knowledge will, not only increase their self-esteem, it can inspire the student to remain in the learning process. Operating in these open, safe and supportive environments, students are able to intellectually incorporate their past knowledge with the latest information they have obtained.¹¹³ Women with prison history, who have access to Christian/theological education that is taught in welcoming,

¹¹¹ Christine E. Blair, “Understanding Adult Learners: Challenges for Theological Education”. *Theological Education*, (Autumn 1997): 11.

¹¹² Ibid., 12.

¹¹³ Ibid., 13.

respectful learning environments, will inform other women that their voice is valued—thus increasing their self- esteem and their connectivity to God.

Professor Mark A. Lamport has identified additional adult learning principles that can enhance theology students’ learning potential in the classroom. Lamport agrees with Malcolm Knowles’, the noted adult educator, assertion that “Andragogy” is a viable tool. Andragogy is a Greek word that means “man leading.” Andragogy refers to specific psychological and educational concepts unique to adult learners which assist their educational process.¹¹⁴ Lamport believes that theology professors enhance their ability to teach adults when they are aware of Knowles’ andragogic perspective. He claims theology professors benefit from recognizing that “adults learn best when the topics studied are of interest to the students; the educators also benefit when the topics can be linked to the students’ world.”¹¹⁵ In Lamport’s estimation, professors invite more thought provoking class discussions when the Biblical and theological coursework assigned to students stimulate their interests and inspires increased focus and study. Similarly, course content which can be integrated with students’ individual life experiences can increase a level of class participation as well.

Theology professors who incorporate andragogy principles can exploit its appeal to women from marginalized communities. Using this educational approach, theology educators focus on biblical and theological readings and assignments that stimulate women’s interests and increase their class participation. Furthermore, when the women are able to relate, on a personal level, to the biblical and theological curriculum, they become more involved in class discussions. Being able to connect biblical stories and scenarios to their own life situations promotes

¹¹⁴ Mark A. Lamport, “The Most Indispensable Habits of Effective Theological Educators: Recalibrating Educational Philosophy, Psychology, and Practice”, *The Asbury Journal* (2010): 36-53.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

opportunities for women with prison backgrounds to engage in open, honest and relevant discussions.

Dr. Douglas L. James has identified additional dimensions in which adult learning theories can assist theology professors in their teaching practices. Dr. James states that theology educators must accept what adult educators acknowledge, which is, the value of understanding the impact of demographics such as race, age, gender, culture, and ethnicity on learning environments. Dr. James contends that adult educators provide theology professors another significant learning concept which confirms that actual learning is transformative and it creates personal growth.¹¹⁶ He further supports his claim that theological education promotes positive changes in the ways students think and behave. In his judgment, students' connection to biblical and theological principles provides opportunities for spiritual growth and a closer relationship with God which can affirm their understanding of self. Thus, current and formerly incarcerated women who have access to a theological education have the potential to increase their spiritual growth and establish a closer connection to God/Jesus. Believing and trusting the loving and welcoming aspects of God/Jesus women obtain from their theology education, can lead to increases in self-esteem and self- acceptance. Summarily, women in marginalized environments benefit from access to theological education as it enables them to challenge and address internal and negative opinions or comments.

Dr. James perceives professors' theological beliefs impact their teaching practices. For Dr. James, theology professors' personal theological beliefs become apparent and are conveyed

¹¹⁶Douglas L. James, Ph.D. "Theological faculty as religious educators: how personal beliefs about teaching, learning, and spiritual growth inform teaching practices," Old.religiouseducation.net/member/02_papers/James.pdf. (Accessed September 17,2016): 6.

throughout their teaching style. To illustrate this point, Dr. James quotes a theology professor who states,

I do have a theology and I think it comes out of the Lutheran tradition —that *grace* is enormously important. And anytime I see anything that looks like law or legalism working around it, I get nervous because I'm so strong on it. Grace really is fundamental for me theoretically, and I try to teach that way. There's always a second chance.¹¹⁷

Because the concept of Grace is important to the theology professor, he is intentional in ensuring that students realize God's Grace is consistent and available to the students. Through his teaching style, the professor insists that the students grasp, through Grace, that God continues to bless, love, support all people. This includes people with incarceration history. The professor's theological understanding that God's grace translates into, "there's always a second chance", speaks volumes to individuals with problematic pasts. This statement can engage one person spiritually which then creates an atmosphere of self-acceptance. Because of Grace, increased self-acceptance becomes a possibility because God's love and acceptance is a reality.

To further support the significance and impact of professors' personal theology in the classroom, Dr. James reveals, "One professor claims to draw upon both *feminist and process theology* to teach pastoral care in a manner that is "accepting of what people bring, because if they feel safe, they're going to learn. "She also attempts to "give everybody a voice, to help students strengthen a sense of self, and to safely consider another perspective."¹¹⁸ The theological teaching style of this professor is another example of important and worthwhile messages conveyed through theological education to the students. This professor, through her biblical/theological class lectures and materials, is able to teach her students to value their voice-

¹¹⁷James, *Theological Faculty*, 10.

¹¹⁸Ibid., 11.

whether they are female or male. She has architected an environment of safety and respect for all, which allows students to engage in open and honest dialogue with each other.

Both theology professors were aware of two important concepts: first, both recognized they had a specific theology with which they were able to identify; second, their personal theology was integrated throughout their teaching. These two examples support Dr. James' claim that theology professors bring their personal theological beliefs and understanding into the classroom, which impact or influence students. In the examples Dr. James provided, the theology professors' specific theology allowed for positive and supportive outcomes for the students. However, theology professors must be aware they have a specific theology and they must be able to identify it and claim it. A viable and productive outcome is the ability to structure class lectures and course materials to ensure the students are taught universal theological constructs that reveal love, grace and hope through an inclusive God.

It is well established that theology professors have a responsibility to know their personal theology before and during instruction because it is oftentimes communicated to students, whether verbalized or through innuendo. However, Professor Mohrlang perceives other characteristics of theology professors' teaching style that can impact their students. He states,

Our teaching will only be compelling to the extent that we ourselves find the biblical message compelling. If we speak of the Bible casually, or in a detached, nonchalant way, we fail to communicate its essential nature and leave our students wondering whether we really believe it ourselves. Even in a secular academic setting, one could argue that students will best come to a true understanding of biblical faith and its significance if they hear it taught competently by an insider, not an outsider, with full conviction of one who truly believes it as the early Christians did.¹¹⁹

Professor Mohrlang's argument reveals a responsibility theology professors must confirm,

¹¹⁹ Roger Mohrlang, PhD. "Teaching the Bible as Scripture in an Academic Setting" Theology Faculty Scholarship. Paper 1, Whitworth University 2015, <http://digitalcommons.whitworth.edu/theologyfaculty/1>. (Accessed November 22,2016): 6.

within their teaching style, a trust and a belief in God/Jesus. Through lectures and presentations, theology professors must not only convey an understanding of the biblical texts, they must also convey a confidence and a dependence on God/Jesus. Their lectures and presentations ought to demonstrate enthusiasm and feeling when describing and discussing God's Word. Students should be able to ascertain with certainty the theology professor's acceptance and reliance on God. In many ways, to students, the religious educators' spiritual connectedness and confidence in God/Jesus are as important as the biblical/theological material that is studied.

Professor Mohrlang avows that theology professors' spiritual conviction is only one of several educational practices they need as it relates to effectively teaching adult learners. He states, "As those who instruct and mentor them, we serve our students best when we (1) focus our teaching, not primarily on critical academic questions, but on the life-transforming theology of the bible; (2) teach scripture prayerfully and with conviction, relying on the power of the Spirit; (3) model in our own life the words we teach, expressing genuine love for those we instruct."¹²⁰ Dr. Mohrlang explains the obligation theology professors have to portray and illuminate the real and personal significance of the Word of God to God's people. Theology professors have to ensure their students learn the spiritual truth, which is that a connection to God/Jesus is a connection to authentic authority. The connection to God's authentic authority provides opportunities for positive changes to occur. Clearly, theology professors impart biblical/theological doctrine to the students, the professors, however communicate tangible Christological principles. These Christological principles convey a key message which is God's love, support and grace are available and accessible to everyone.

The Adult Basic Education community, coupled with Learning Theorists have identified

¹²⁰ Mohrlang, *Teaching the Bible*, 8.

significant and vital educational tools theology professors can effectively utilize to teach adults from marginalized communities. Creating safe, welcoming and affirming learning environments is essential; identifying biblical and theological material to which they can relate is a necessity. In addition, theology professors who are in touch with their personal theology and who can convey, through their teaching, an excitement and a genuine love for God, demonstrate evidence of best practices for teaching women from marginalized communities. Theology professors who utilize the aforementioned best practices establish appropriate learning environments that enable current and formerly incarcerated women to obtain Christian/theological education.

CHAPTER 4

PLAN OF IMPLEMENTATION

The first goal that I chose to address was to take steps to increase awareness, at the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS), Marymount Manhattan College and New York Theological Seminary, of the benefits that can be derived from providing New York State female inmates (residing in Bedford Hills Correctional Facility) the opportunity to complete the requirements necessary to receive a certificate in Theological Education and Leadership (TEL). My journey began when I initiated discussions, and subsequently established alliances, with individuals at these diverse organizations, and informed them of my intent to start my Doctor of Ministry project.

In November 2015, I began my journey with a call to Dorothy M, one of the chaplains at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility (BHCF). Chaplain Dorothy M. is highly experienced, which means she has knowledge of the machinations of the DOCCS as well as the educational process within BHCF. It is of note that Bedford Hills Correctional Facility is a New York State maximum security women's correctional facility, located in Westchester County in New York State. I explained to Chaplain Dorothy that my proposed D.Min Project was purposed to originate an onsite certificate program in Christian/theological education. I requested her feedback on the viability of this project and, if she agreed with its merits, her suggestions and counsel that would strengthen and support my goals and plans. Chaplain Dorothy responded that she believed my project would be a viable program to start at BHCF. She continued in this vein to describe their existing educational programs. As such, she informed me that Marymount Manhattan College coordinates the college programs at BHCF; the women have completed their

GED, AS, and/or BS Liberal Arts degrees at this facility. She also provided the name of a contact person, onsite Director at Marymount, Aileen B. Then, Ms. Dorothy summarized the current and proposed educational initiatives at BHCF including a statement that Union Theological Seminary had expressed interest in building a program that would begin with the introduction of a theology class the following the fall semester. The UTS proposal included allowing BHCF women to join the Union students for this class, however, I learned that, although UTS planned to offer the BHCF females an opportunity to pursue an educational experience in theology, this engagement did not lead to a certificate or a degree in religious studies. The Chaplain shared that there are two paths that one might navigate to start a new program at BHCF; through religious programs or through the educational route. Because so many religious programs existed at BHCF (in fact Bible Study is held daily), the chaplain stated that the college endeavor is more flexible, therefore she suggested that I consider this option. Chaplain Dorothy restated that I needed to contact the Marymount Manhattan College director to discuss the feasibility of my proposed educational plans at BHCF.

During my conversation with Chaplain Dorothy, I learned that many of the BHCF women, who enroll in the Marymount Manhattan (MMM) program, take their educational training seriously and are held to the same standards as the MMM students at the main campus. Thus, the women are expected to commit to attendance and comply with all of the class requirements. She then discussed the steps I needed to take to gain approval. To wit, I needed to provide a detailed description of the program, a description of the course content, and program completion requirements including prerequisites. In addition, as creator of this new entity, I would be responsible for all course materials including supplies such as notebooks, textbooks, pens, and paper. The Chaplain informed me that DOCCS would necessarily approve all course

material prior to acceptance at the facility. Next, Chaplain Dorothy informed me that DOCCS keeps a record of all teachers and guests that enter the NEW York State (NYS) correctional facilities as “Volunteers” except DOCCS staff members thus, all instructors in my sphere of influence, the D.Min project, needed to gain clearance to become a “Registered Volunteer” at DOCCS. Registration is mostly an online process, coupled with providing hard copies of one’s driver’s license, all pertinent evidence of educational background - in my case this meant that I needed to submit evidence of my Masters in Social Work and Divinity degrees as well as my NYS Certification as an LCSW. To complete the Volunteer application process, a letter of sponsorship, from an existing structure inside BHCF, either the religious component such as the Chaplaincy program or the educational component, is required.

Because my project is a certificate program that focuses on Christian and theological education, the chaplain and I agreed that I should ask the MMM program to sponsor me. According to Chaplain Dorothy, it takes two to three months at DOCCS to obtain approval for the “Volunteer” status. She then informed me that, if I had ever been arrested, I would not be approved to enter BHCF or receive the “Volunteer” status. These requirements are applicable for instructors who apply to the program.

I appreciated that Chaplain Dorothy agreed to speak with me. My conversation with her provided me with a great deal of information regarding the machinations of the DOCCS, BHCF and MMM. I ended my conversation with her somewhat overwhelmed by the number of people and hurdles (in my mind, they were hurdles) I needed to move, yet her enthusiasm for my program helped me to maintain my own excitement about making this project come to fruition.

In the month of January 2016, I followed my plan to schedule phone or in person meetings with persons whom I deemed essential to my project. In addition to making telephone

calls to the MMM, and Director Aileen B, I began to review the DOCCS' extensive list of requirements and guidance for this Volunteer Application process.

In February 2016, I convened a meeting with my Doctor of Ministry (D.Min) advisor, Dr. Eleanor Moody Shepherd. I shared the status of my project and the feedback I received from the BHCF Chaplain. I informed her also, about the Chaplain's suggestions to establish connections with two entities: DOCCS and MMM. I believed that making a connection with the former would be difficult, yet would be key to my overall success. Dr. Eleanor agreed with me that it was necessary that I reach out to Aileen B., and that it was equally important for me to connect with someone with DOCCS experience. At the same time, I informed Dr. Eleanor of a meeting I scheduled with Rev. P. S., the new Director of the NYTS Sing Sing program. I believed that, although Rev. P. was new to his NYTS position, he was very familiar with the NYTS Sing Sing program and, more importantly, he had many years of experience working in the New York State DOCCS. Thus, I believed it was advantageous for me to meet with him to discover his thoughts and ideas regarding seeking a contact at DOCCS. The remainder of the meeting with Dr. Eleanor focused on the scripture that I deemed relevant, thus appropriate for my project. The biblical text is found in the Gospel of Luke 4:18-19 (NRSV) which states,

(18) The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me,
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the
captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
(19) to proclaim the year of the Lord's
favor.

I expressed to Dr. Eleanor my view of how this scripture communicates God and Jesus' message of love, care and support for marginalized individuals, which includes incarcerated and

formerly incarcerated women. Luke 4:18-19 also conveys clergy's responsibility to help individuals who feel excluded from God's love to realize that they are indeed part of God's family.

During February 2016, I convened a Site Team Phone meeting that focused primarily on my project status. My Site Team members agreed that I needed to confer with the MMM director. We also discussed the development of my curriculum, which I explained would be similar to the one used at NYTS, however I planned to customize classes to accommodate and enhance women's leadership and interpersonal skills. Finally, I informed the group that I sent a completed Volunteer Application to DOCCS and, subsequently scheduled a meeting with Rev. C to discuss his assessment of my project.

Later that month, I met with Rev. P. to provide an overview of the program I planned for female inmates at BHCF (See Appendix B). Rev. P., having knowledge of NYTS' more than 30 years of success with the onsite Sing Sing theological education program, expressed that he believed it was a good idea to introduce such a program to females. At that time, he warned that the DOCCS' approval process was very protracted. Because of the time required, Rev. P. emphasized the importance of completing the DOCCS Volunteer Application and, he suggested that, to enable acceleration of the application process, I should connect with an established program at BHCF, such as Marymount Manhattan Liberal Arts College.

During the month of March 2016, after leaving several voice messages and emails, I finally connected with Aileen B. When we spoke and I resumed the explanation of my project, she interrupted with a very unusual request. She asked me to call her the next day when she would have more time for discussion. When I called the following day, we spent 1-1/2 hours reviewing the specifics of my project, the existing educational programs at BHCF, and

characteristics of the Bedford Hills women, especially students enrolled in the MMM educational programs. Aileen informed me that her primary reason for scheduling a more in-depth conversation was to emphasize that many of the Bedford Hills women had previously requested an educational program that focused on religion and theology. She told me that, at BHCF, Bible Study and classes in religion were oftentimes full. Before our conversation ended, Aileen informed me that Union Theological Seminary had expressed interest in bringing a Master 's program to BHCF, however Aileen believed that such an initiative was too aggressive at BHCF at the time. She believed that my onsite certificate program would be a more appropriate program from an academic and administrative perspective. Aileen and I discussed the process for gaining approval for a new program and, she basically echoed the information that Chaplain Dorothy and Rev. P. provided. Aileen provided additional requirements that include scheduling (night classes only) restrictions.

Next, Aileen advised me that I needed to document and submit a formal proposal that described the details of my program. I needed to include its purpose, which would describe the number of classes, duration, and length of each class, and student capacity for each. The document she described needed to state that my program would be sufficiently funded for at least two semesters and that a letter from NYTS needed to confirm that the Bedford Hills candidates, upon successful completion, would receive an NYTS Certificate of Completion. She also offered that she was aware of 15 to 20 possible candidates, women who had expressed an interest in pursuing a theological education. I assured Aileen that I would provide the information required to start the program.

Aileen and I concluded the meeting with a discussion about the inmates at BHCF. She informed me that the women in the MMM programs assign a high level of significance to their

classes. Also, they must commit to complete all of their assigned work. MMM has a library at BHCF that the MMM students can use in their free time. In our discussion about identifying acceptance criteria for my program, Aileen suggested that I follow the same guidelines that MMM uses. I agreed with this arrangement and I offered that I would develop a brief questionnaire and conduct a personal interview with each female who expressed an interest.

At the conclusion of our discussion, Aileen and I agreed to continue on-going phone conversations and further, she offered to assist me with navigating through the DOCCS process. She stated that, although she was in favor of my project coming to BHCF, ultimately DOCCS had the last word; they are the approving body.

I enjoyed speaking with Aileen, although initially, I was nervous. However, the enthusiasm she expressed for my project excited me. I came to realize that she liked the idea that students (BHCF female inmates) expressed a sincere interest in learning about God and theology. Also Aileen understood that the NYTS onsite Master of Professional Studies (MPS) at Sing Sing has, for more than thirty years, significantly benefitted incarcerated men. Thus, Aileen supported my thesis that offering the same religious and theological education to incarcerated women will, in all probability, yield similar success levels.

During the month of March, I scheduled a follow-up status meeting with my advisor, Dr. Eleanor. I summarized my phone meeting with Aileen recounting that she was open and expressed profound interest in the prospect of implementing my project at BHCF. Thereupon, she offered useful information about DOCCS and its process. I walked Dr. Eleanor through the requirements for a formal proposal including the letter required from NYTS stating that it would grant a certificate of completion. I shared further that, because of the elongated amount of time leading to approval, Aileen agreed to sponsor my project in hopes it would shorten the approval

process. Then I shared highlights of my meeting with Rev. P.; who stated that he liked the idea of my project and provided helpful and informative suggestions as well. Dr. Eleanor recommended that I make the consideration to start my project in September 2016. I agreed.

In keeping with our schedule, I convened a Site Team meeting in March; I provided the same status that I discussed with my advisor. During the month of March 2016, I initiated several email discussions that significantly impacted me as well as my process. First, I contacted Dr. I, the President of NYTS, to inform him about my uplifting conversation with Aileen. During our talk, I mentioned that Aileen requested a letter of agreement from NYTS to provide a Certificates of Completion to the BHCF graduates of my program. Dr. I referred me to Dr. C., the Director of the NYTS Certificate program and Rev P. who oversees the NYTS Sing Sing program as points of contact for my needs. In that same meeting, Dr. I informed me that there were many moving parts to my requests along with a complicated history with DOCCS.

Subsequent to my correspondence with Dr. I., I arranged to meet with Dr. C to review the details of my project. Dr. C and I had an extensive meeting at the end of March wherein I explained the details of my project at BHCF. I described the purpose and location of the prison along with the curriculum I planned to introduce at the facility. I explained that the two-year, four semester program would mirror the current NYTS certificate curriculum, that it would be a 10 course program delivered in twelve sessions each. Adding that each course would be 3 hours in duration, I then provided the course titles: Old Testament, New Testament, Biblical Exegesis, Theology, Church History, Christian Ethics, Pastoral Care, Intro to Preaching, World Christianity, and Women and Leadership. I explained that the final course, Women and Leadership, was added to address anger management, conflict resolution, and building interpersonal and leadership skills among women. Finally, I informed Dr. C that professors will

be volunteers from the M.Div. and D.Min pool of graduates who have teaching experience.

While this group of volunteers will be sourced from the NYTS Dr. Eleanor Moody- Shepherd Women's Resource Center, the Site Team and I would be responsible for costs associated with the start up.

As the meeting progressed Dr. A, who supports Dr. C, and who represents the seminary in discussions regarding new 'satellite' NYTS Certificate programs joined our discussion. I recapped my encouraging conversation with Aileen B. and informed both of Aileen's request to provide a formal description of my proposal and the letter I described to Dr. I. Among the few questions that Dr. A asked was for clarification of MMM's, NYTS and DOCCS' role and responsibility and how they would interact with each other and with my project. Dr. A informed me that I would be the Site Coordinator/Supervisor of this project at BHCF under the supervision of Dr. C, who is the Director of the NYTS Certificate Program. We concluded our meeting with a list of "**Next Steps**" all of which I owned, except the last one:

1. Obtain educators' resumes; submit the to Dr. C.
2. Continue to consult with Dr. C and NYTS process to gain new "site" approved.
3. Partner with Aileen to set class schedule at BHCF.
4. Create NYTS application for the BHCF students, Dr. C will develop.
5. Discuss potential project funding options with Dr. C- W
6. Determine if a MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) between MMM, DOCCS and NYTS is required.
7. Submit copy of my curriculum to Drs. C and A.
8. Dr. C will discuss my project with the NYTS Academic Dean at the next NYTS Faculty meeting.

My meeting with Drs. C and A provided me with significant insights into the protocols within the seminary. Meeting with them gave me the opportunity to learn and participate in the start-up of a very exciting, and certainly very challenging, new program. What helped me to remain somewhat calm was that I was familiar with most of the people, however I began to understand them from a different perspective, thus, a level of anxiety, which in my opinion, is understandable. I left that meeting sensing overwhelming support for my project; no one had shut it down. I must admit that I had some anxiety, yet, because I believe in the power of God/Jesus, I knew God was in that room with me. In fact, I trust God to be at every meeting and in every call I make-sensing his presence affords me a level of comfort.

Also during this month, I emailed a copy of my D. Min project to Aileen for her review. She responded that my proposal was appropriate; it explained in detail all facets of the onsite Christian/theological educational program (See Appendix B). Aileen had no questions nor did she wish to make changes.

In April 2016, Aileen and I held our second telephone meeting which began with a discussion of sponsorship for my project. In other words, who would pitch my project to DOCCS. Aileen expressed that my project could go through MMM, the Chaplain's office, or I, meaning NYTS, could apply for what Aileen described as a "Stand Alone" application. A request to DOCCS for a "Stand Alone" application would require me to apply singularly. Aileen and I acknowledged that it was more feasible for me to be sponsored through her program because my project was a theological educational program, which would be a suitable addition to MMM's educational program. Having MMM sponsor my project would provide me the advantage of having an established and highly respected program already in operation at BHCF; Aileen would be able to navigate me through DOCCS thus enabling me to hopefully avoid

bureaucratic pitfalls. Next we discussed the DOCCS Volunteer Application. Aileen informed me that I had emailed it to DOCCS prematurely; she explained that I must receive approval from DOCCS before I can submit the Volunteer application. She stated that DOCCS was in possession of all my information; she explained further that it was currently on hold. Aileen informed me that she would discuss my proposal with the MMM administrators and with the BHCF Superintendent, both needed be on board. Aileen wanted to know the status of the NYTS letter and I informed her of the meetings I have had with NYTS leadership and my continuing efforts to complete the letter. Aileen and I agreed to have our next phone conversation in May 2016.

My conversation with Aileen covered a great deal of important and relevant material. I began to observe that we added more and more detail to our talks moving from the general to the specific. Actually, my recent conversation contained information that led me to an acute awareness of the many unique components combined with the various steps involved in the development of my project. It became clear that I was only in the beginning phase of the process; I was sure that, as time passed, more would be revealed and experienced.

I held my first meeting in May 2016 with my Site Team; there, I expressed that I had yet another supportive, encouraging and detailed phone meeting with Aileen. I explained that we delved into discussions about requirements for sponsorship, specifics of my curriculum, and the need for my classes to occur in the evenings. The Site Team and I also discussed the need to create a survey and/or a Pre/Post test for the BHCF female inmates. The outputs of this survey would allow me to gain a sense of their interest in studying theology and their knowledge of the subject matter. The remaining time of the Site Team meeting focused on ways to secure funding to cover the costs of supplies and other expenses such as instructor stipends and transportation.

In this vein, I reminded the Site Team that, for the first year of my project, I would teach a course in each semester thereby requiring only two remaining instructors.

The next scheduled meeting in May 2016, with Dr. W-H, addressed funding. Dr. W-H is affiliated with the NYTS fundraising office; thus, my meeting was purposed to determine available options to raise money for my project. I discussed a couple of the funding options that I considered. I inquired about the possibility of creating a “Go fund Me” page on Facebook. I also contemplated the “Adopt A Student” program, which entails asking 15 people (assuming I have 15 registered Bedford Hills participants in my program) to sponsor a student for one-hundred dollars each. Dr. W-H informed me that only I, as a single applicant, would be allowed to avail myself of this project. However, if my project is connected with NYTS, then it becomes NYTS’ responsibility to generate such funding. Dr. W-H questioned funding sources for instructors and supplies; I responded that we will operate from an ‘in kind’ budget for the first two years. I added that my teaching supplies would be donated and my instructors would be volunteers who agreed to accept dinner and traveling expenses as compensation. I stated further that my volunteer instructors were experienced instructors who have acquired M.Div., D.Min or Ph.D. degrees. I shared further that they were aware that my program was in its initial phase, however, they wanted to assist me because they believed strongly in the project. To obtain more clarity on this topic, Dr. W-H asked the Academic Dean, Dr. C, to join our discussion.

Upon his arrival, I reviewed my project with Dr. W-H coupled with an explanation that I was exploring funding options. Dr. C asked several pertinent questions. He wanted to know how I would measure the participants’ outcomes and how I define and envision the transformational aspects of my project. Then, Dr. Co wanted to understand my sustainability plans. I provided answers to each of the Academic Dean’s questions. As such, I stated that my

project would be a qualitative research project examining the impact, if any, studying the biblical texts and learning theological principles I can provide to the participants. I informed Dr. Co that I expected the Bedford Hills female inmates, exposed to a theological education, would have an opportunity to gain similar results and benefits that male inmates at Sing Sing experience. Dr. Co informed me that he would not be able to grant permission to award NYTS certificates of completion to the BHCF students, because he had questions regarding the viability of the project. Dr. Co stated that he would discuss the status of my project with the NYTS president and would follow up with me. I must say that I left this meeting somewhat confused. However, I decided to allow him time to discuss my project with the NYTS president. I also decided to discuss this situation with my advisor.

A few days later, Dr. C. contacted me to say that he would compose a letter with NYTS commitment to grant a certificate of completion. Dr. C asked me schedule a meeting with him to discuss the particulars of the letter and to review measurable goals of my project. I thanked Dr. C for his support; I also agreed to meet with him to discuss the research aspects of my project. This news lifted my spirits and I surmised that I owed a debt of gratitude to whoever or whatever caused Dr. C to change his mind about granting the letter of intent.

During May 2016, I had a phone meeting with my advisor informing her of the events of the past two weeks especially the contents of my conversation with the NYTS academic dean. Dr. Eleanor informed me that she agreed that the dean's feasibility and measurability questions regarding my D. Min project were reasonable. She also emphasized that I create research instruments to address and answer the dean's questions. She suggested further that, to save time, I should draft the letter that would include the required information and bring to my next meeting with Dr. C. Thus, Dr. C. would only need to review the letter and provide input he felt was

warranted. Dr. Eleanor instructed me include my overall funding responsibilities in the letter to indicate that NYTS would incur no financial burden. I believed her advice was appropriate and agreed to create the letter with her suggestions prior to my meeting with the academic dean.

Before ending the meeting, I informed her that the letter would also include a paragraph acknowledging Aileen and MMM's support for my project, which Dr. Eleanor thought was appropriate.

At the beginning of June 2016, I met with Dr. C; I provided him with a draft of the aforementioned letter. Thereupon, Dr. C reviewed the draft and made appropriate revisions. He and I used the remainder of our scheduled time to discuss what he, as an experienced researcher, believed were necessary components of any research study. He informed me that he believed each study should include cognitive, behavioral, and skill set outcomes that were measurable. We also discussed my project's need for a "Sustainability Plan". He shared that I needed a 3 to 5 five-year plan that would detail how the program would sustain itself beyond my involvement. I explained to Dr. C I plan to remain involved with my project beyond graduation. I also conveyed that, based on the information Aileen shared, revealing the Bedford Hills female inmates' high level of interest in a Christian/theological education, I anticipated the project to generate a natural sustainability plan. Overall, I welcomed Dr. C's research ideas and, at the conclusion of our meeting, committed to email the revised letter for his review.

After several revisions between myself and Dr. C, I finally completed the final version of the letter and upon his approval submitted it to Aileen for her review and approval and to determine if it met the DOCCS' approval (See Appendix C letter).

As soon as Aileen acknowledged receipt of her letter, I inquired who at the DOCCS should receive the document. Aileen instructed me to send the letter directly to the DOCCS

Commissioner, Anthony J. Annucci, whose office is in Albany, NY. I informed Aileen that I would email as well as send a hard copy of the letter to Commissioner Annucci; I would send a courtesy copy to her and to my advisor. As a point of information, Aileen suggested that I allow at least a week to receive a response from the DOCCS commissioner; then, if no response, I should follow-up to obtain a status.

In this month, I emailed a copy of my letter to Rev. P, and gained an opportunity to speak with him. Rev. P had expressed his approval stating that the letter was written with clarity and covered the details of my project. Rev. P stated that he was willing to support my efforts by making a personal call to the DOCCS to endorse my plan. He echoed Aileen's warning that the DOCCS moves slowly, thus, I should not expect a speedy response. He suggested that I continue in prayer, and to maintain focus. I thanked Rev. P for his kind words and his support. Since Rev. P is aware and quite knowledgeable regarding DOCCS and its procedures, I trusted his judgment, thus I settled into the knowledge that a response might not be forthcoming.

Towards the end of June 2016, I engaged in a phone conversation with Thomas F., the director of Candler School of Theology's Certificate in Theological Studies (CTS) program. Candler School of Theology, as mentioned previously, is associated with Emory University located near Atlanta, Georgia. According to Thomas, Candler's CTS program is an onsite program in theological studies offered to female inmates at the Arrendale State Prison which is located in Alto, Georgia. Thomas informed me that CTS is a one-year onsite theology program that offers incarcerated women biblical and theological courses in which the primary goal is to develop their voice and recognize that their theology is valid. Thomas provided a historical context for CTS stating that the program opened in 2009 with fifteen female enrollees and has grown to approximately sixty. Initially, there was pushback from Georgia's Department of

Corrections; today, the DOC is overwhelmingly in favor of the CTS program. Professors for the CTS program, said Thomas, are Candler M.Div or Ph.D. students; he also reported that the students enjoy their classes and the professors, likewise, enjoy teaching them. Thomas stated that, in his opinion, CTS affords the female inmates a safe environment to speak openly and dialogue with others in a non-threatening manner, especially with people who do not agree with them. The CTS program receives funding primarily from grants. Thomas informed me that he was aware of the MMM Liberal Arts College program at BHCF; he expressed that my onsite theological program would be a suitable partner to Bedford Hills' current educational systems. To augment the CTS program's success, Thomas and Candler are looking to add an Associate degree to the CTS program. He expressed interest in remaining in contact as we navigate this program. The content of my phone conversation with Thomas validated the literature and the Sing Sing study output, which is access to theological education proves to be beneficial to the inmates (female or male) and their stakeholders.

Early in the month of July 2016, my D. Min process changed substantially. I received a call from Dr. C., who left me a voice mail stating that DOCCS denied my request. Dr. C. then stated that I must change the direction of my project, because I will not be able to gain entrance to Bedford Hills to deliver theology classes to the female inmates.

This news was heartbreakng to me and frankly impossible to believe. I could not believe this information that Dr. C. left on my phone. At first, I was not sure what to do or what had just happened to me and mostly to my D.Min project. I prayed, I cried, I prayed some more, I cried some more. After a few moments of self- reflection, I reached out to Dr. I, the NYTS president. Dr. I verified that DOCCS did not approve me, thus I needed to change my D.Min project.

Next, I spoke with Dr. L, the director of the NYTS Doctorate of Ministry program. I informed her of DOCCS' decision to reject my request. She told me to document a detailed description of the event; we then attempted to discuss my potential options. I was in no position nor frame of mind to think about alternatives. I had no ideas what options were available. Two days earlier my direction and my options were clear and grounded; today they were unearthed. Thus, I really did not know what to do, which meant that feelings of distress and anxiety crept in.

Due to this new development, July 2016 was filled with phone calls, emails and in-person meetings, all focused on identifying the best approach to address this new turn of events. My next activity in July was a follow-up phone meeting with Aileen wherein I explained the current status noting the reasons for disapproval decision. Thereupon, Aileen expressed her disappointment as well as her surprise. Aileen stated that she would attempt to speak with DOCCS to ascertain more information about their denial of my request. I thanked Aileen for her support and we agreed to connect again later this month or early in August 2016.

At my next July meeting with the Site Team I covered the details of DOCCS' decision. Of course the Site Team members were shocked. One member suggested that we might be able to reach out to a colleague who has connections at DOCCS thinking her contact would be able to obtain some information to get me connected to Deputy Commissioner Linda H. via phone. Even with the protests and suggestions that we might reverse this decision, the greater part of our meeting centered around possible alternatives. We then agreed to channel our attention to finding an appropriate venue for my project.

Donna, the pastor of Judson Memorial Church where I am a member, and I met to discuss my situation. Prior to my arrival, Donna contacted Dr. I, the NYTS president to discuss my situation. He assured Donna that the DOCCS decision to deny my entry into Bedford Hills

involved internal administrative matters that were unrelated to my project or to me personally. Donna and I agreed, as did so many others, that unfortunately the DOCCS' decision had the greatest impact on the women at Bedford Hills who had expressed great interest in receiving training in theological education. I appreciated Donna's support and willingness to advocate for me with Dr. I., and I expressed my appreciation for her involvement.

NEW DIRECTION

At my July status meeting with my advisor, Dr. Eleanor, and with the NYTS D.Min Director, Dr. L, they proposed the possibility of creating a new D.Min project that would be essentially the same as my initial project but would take a different direction. So, they posed the idea that I consider developing a curriculum to teach principles of theological doctrines to formerly incarcerated women. Although I was denied access to confined women, I could design a theological program that targeted previously incarcerated women. Even though I was now directed towards a single homogenous group, this new educational curriculum/model would be appropriate for both. I liked this idea, I thought it had potential-it actually lifted my spirits in several ways. First, providing formerly confined women access to theological education was as significant and meaningful as teaching female inmates within the confines of a correctional facility. Second, having access to formerly incarcerated women would perhaps require reduced oversights and would be less complicated. Third, this new direction, as stated above, would necessitate changing only my Challenge Statement, Needs Analysis and the accompanying bibliography.

My advisor agreed that this new direction was a viable option given the denial from DOCCS. She offered, as a reference, Terry, a formerly incarcerated woman, whom she believed

might be a helpful resource who would be able to identify other women who might agree to participate in my "Pilot" program.

I left my meeting with these women feeling much better than the previous two weeks. In fact, I was excited again. I had to face a different direction that would surely be tough, yet I felt it was feasible and still relevant to my original D. Min proposal. In many ways, this revision was just as important, if not more so, than my original D.Min project. I looked forward creating my curriculum and its associated "Pilot" program.

A Site Team member spoke with me near the end of July, stating that she supported the alternative option and reminded me that I should contact Terry in an effort to utilize her as a resource to determine how I might present the Pilot in effective ways to build a curriculum. I was encouraged by the continued support I felt during this meeting.

During August 2016, I focused on several important components to my revised project. My first priority was recruitment. To address this activity, I spoke briefly with Terry to schedule time to meet to continue our talk. A few days later, we met to continue our discussion and to become better acquainted. Terry shared that she completed ten years in a Federal prison. Moreover, she was currently working and, in addition, attending classes at Columbia University. Terry stated that her interests matched her desire to assist women who were released from prison. In fact, Terry, together with Columbia Law School, had collaborated on a panel discussion that targeted formerly incarcerated women and their families. Terry suggested that she might be able to provide names of other women who would be interested in participating in the Pilot program. Then, to gain a greater depth of understanding, Terry then asked me to provide more detail about my project. In response, I described the curriculum; there would be eight sessions to be covered in a two-week time frame: two evenings 6pm-8pm and one Saturday 1pm-5pm. To compensate

for their time, we planned to provide a meal and two-fare Metro Cards to each participant. Terry requested that I create a handout, that explained the facets of my Pilot program, and she agreed to distribute to potential participants. I agreed to email Terry an information brochure that she could reference in her conversations with her friends and associates.

Next I met with Allyson, an NYTS D.Min student, who also offered a contact; a woman who works with formerly incarcerated women. Also, I connected with yet another resource, Stevie, a director of a woman's shelter. We spoke about my program for which I subsequently sent a description which she promised to share with her colleagues as well as the women who reside at her shelter.

It was encouraging for me to have established associations and alliances with persons who had connected with members of the prison community. I felt energized and my excitement remained high. As soon as I shared information about my project, these women showed interest and expressed their willingness to assist me.

During this same month I met with Allyson's connection, Toni, who works at a women's Halfway House where most of its residents are formerly incarcerated or have prior substance abuse issues. Toni revealed to me that she completed a ten-year sentence in a maximum security State penitentiary. In addition to holding a full time job, she is enrolled in college pursuing a Bachelor's degree. At our meeting, I reviewed my Pilot program (See Appendix D). After hearing my description of the program, Toni stated that she felt assured me that the women would be interested in participating in my Pilot. She shared that most of the women believed in God and would benefit spiritually from studying biblical and theological principles. After we agreed upon a potential schedule for the Pilot, Toni agreed to share the information with her

manager and the women in the Halfway House. We decided to continue phone and email contact.

I believed that my meeting with Toni was productive; we concurred in principle about the benefits of my project. I believe that she connected to my program because of her involvement in an organization that focuses on acquiring the support of Black Churches to address the plight of our target group. Toni and Terry's connection to these female communities are integral to helping me identify participants for the Pilot program.

In August, I met again with Terry who asked for a one-page summary description of my Pilot program that she wished to circulate among her contacts. She then informed me that I needed to provide all books and supplies to the women. I replied that all items she mentioned were covered in my budget. Next, Terry and I discussed potential venues where we might host the Pilot: NYTS, Columbia (due to her contacts at Columbia Law School), or Toni's Halfway House were considered. I suggested NYTS as the first option and agreed to determine space availability.

I met with Dr. L in August and provided her with updates of the meetings and recruitment efforts in which I had been engaged since our last meeting in July. Dr. L suggested that I schedule Terry and Toni's people to attend my Pilot program together. I agreed with her idea; it was a great suggestion as this combination of women would have Federal and State prison backgrounds. After Dr. L explained NYTS' process to obtain a room, I started the room reservation process immediately. Thereby, in late August, Allyson identified a room at NYTS for our use the two evenings during the week and on Saturday afternoons. She then assumed responsibility to be the NYTS staff person on duty to oversee my Pilot sessions. I was very happy for Allyson's continued support and willingness to help me.

At the end of August, Toni contacted me to request my participation in a panel discussion that she planned to host at NYTS. One of her panelists, a pastor, became sick and could not keep her commitment. Because of my ministerial background coupled with the meeting topic, Toni believed that I would be an appropriate replacement. I agreed to participate on the panel entitled “Family Mass Incarceration: What the Church Needs to Know” (See Appendix E).

In September 2016, I met with my Site Team to share my August status. We also discussed the budget, then divided responsibilities for each segment. I informed the team that Donna, the pastor at Judson Memorial Church, would supply food and Metro cards for each participant. Next, we discussed my decision to engage three to four instructors to assist with teaching all eight classes. The team agreed that this was a good decision; we then set stipend payments for each instructor. Finally, we discussed the change in direction of my project and the subsequent name change from **“Class Is Now In Session: Female Inmates Obtain Ministry Education”** to **“Theological Education and Leadership (TEL): A Unique Curriculum”**.

During this month, I met with the instructional staff that volunteered to assist me with the Theological Education and Leadership (TEL) Pilot program. I distributed a copy of the TEL Pilot curriculum which we used to assign classes. We also we discussed class focus and requirements for supplies to support each class and its participants. At this time, I informed all instructors that I would be present in each of the classes-not to assist, but to observe. Instructors not only agreed that I should be present, they expressed that it was necessary for me to be in attendance. While I distributed their class schedules, I informed them of my plans to work with 2 to 3 individuals who would identify potential candidates for our classes.

In my September meeting with Dr. Eleanor, we discussed my status update. I shared the encouraging and supportive meetings with Terry and Toni in August, as well as my new contacts

who offered to assist with my recruitment efforts for the Pilot. I gave Dr. Eleanor copies of my questionnaire (see Appendix F), the TEL Curriculum, and the TEL Pilot format (See Appendix D). I also provided status on the date, location and class curriculum which cover the topics: 1st and 2nd Testament, Biblical Exegesis, Church Ethics and Women and Leadership. My advisor provided encouraging and meaningful feedback which continued to motivate me to move forward.

Continuing my September schedule, Aileen and I held a phone meeting. She restated her disappointment that I would not be able to work with the women at Bedford Hills because she continued to believe it would benefit the women there especially since they had expressed a sincere desire to be exposed to a Christian/theological education. I expressed my appreciation for her support, then assured her that I had begun to pursue a different direction with my project. We agreed to stay connected; she wished me well with my studies and with the TEL curriculum.

In October 2016, I held a Site Team phone meeting. We welcomed Lance, a Community Minister at Judson, to the Team. Lance had agreed to partner with me to facilitate the Biblical Exegesis class. As usual, I provided status on the TEL Pilot progress and we reviewed the budget. I informed the Site Team that, thus far, Toni had referred three women and each had completed the required questionnaire. In addition, Terry was still discussing the TEL Pilot with her contacts. Stevie, the director of the women's shelter, emailed me to say she had shared my TEL Pilot program with her colleagues and was awaiting their response. I informed this group that my anxiety level began to increase because only three women, so far, had enrolled in the Pilot which was scheduled to begin in less than ten days. Nevertheless, I kept my faith and continued to move forward.

On October 18, 2016, I attended an event at Union Theological Seminary (UTS) entitled, “Faith in America; Invisible Woman: The Experience of Women and Girls in the Era of Mass Incarceration.” (See Appendix G). This UTS event was a panel discussion that addressed the issues and concerns of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women. Michelle Alexander, the author of the New York Times Bestseller, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, moderated the panel. UTS received 800 responses for this event. In fact, UTS had to designate a room across from the auditorium for the overflow where the attendees watched a streaming of the discussion. I was fortunate to be seated in the actual auditorium. Four of the five panelist were formerly incarcerated women. All of the panelists and the moderator, Ms. Alexander, asserted that incarcerated women are rendered ‘invisible’, thus few people question their needs and, thus, very little services are offered to them. Ms. Alexander acknowledged the emphasis and the spotlight has targeted incarcerated men. She stated further that, even she focused her book almost exclusively on the plight of men in prison. Most agreed that there are many more men incarcerated, yet women are the fastest growing group entering the prison system. Each panelist gave her thoughts and accompanying opinions about the needs of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women. The panel covered several topics: the impact of incarceration on women and their families, their need for job search training, and how the church can establish spiritual support to incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women and their families. What was planned to be a two-hour panel discussion lasted for almost three hours. The large turnout seemed to confirm what many people thought-it was important to discuss the issues and the needs that incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women face. Attending this UTS event strengthened my belief in the significance of the TEL Pilotprogram.

TEL PILOT

The Theological Education and Leadership Pilot program was slated to begin on Thursday, October 20, 2016. I was very excited, although I had scheduled only three participants - I was excited nonetheless. Earlier that week, I distributed an email, that contained the teaching schedule, to the other instructors. Each instructor was aware of their respective schedule that included the number of hours they would teach. My email provided simply a bird's eye view of the entire teaching schedule (See Appendix H). Because the TEL Pilot would be held in a classroom at NYTS, which was familiar space, I felt less apprehensive. My comfort level was short-lived; at 5pm I stood in the group room awaiting the arrival of participants. I had strategically set up a meal to be served first, to compensate for late arrivals, to allow the participants to greet and mingle, and for me to obtain signed consent forms. I had prepared a class folder for each participant; each contained handouts and a consent form. At 5:30pm, I stood alone in the room; I began to call each participant, and when I received no answer, I left messages and continued to wait. I remained alone in the room until 6:45pm - no one came. After repeating my calls without making a single contact, I called Toni because she knew the women and had referred them to the TEL Pilot program. Toni was as surprised as I that none of the women showed up for class. She then offered to follow up and report her findings on the following Friday. Needless to say, I was disappointed and puzzled about their decision to not attend the class especially when, the night before, I sent a text reminder requesting confirmation, and they all confirmed their attendance. Naturally, I became uncertain about class attendance the following day.

The next day, Friday October 21, 2016, Toni contacted me and explained that two of the women were not able to find the building; the other one forgot about the class. All three women

assured Toni that they would attend Friday's session. I thanked Toni for following up with these women and agreed to report a status on Friday. Only one woman appeared on Friday evening; it was dinner time, so I surmised the other two would most likely arrive later. At 5:30pm, I, together with the guest instructor, began the "Introduction to Theology" session. At the end of the session, L, the sole participant stated that she enjoyed learning about theology; she also appreciated that she was the only student because she was able to ask a lot of questions. At 7pm we ended the class; L signed for a two-fare metro card, thanked us for the class and agreed to return the following week. Upon L's departure, I thanked my partner/instructor and apologized for the low attendance. The instructor replied that he was not upset; he actually enjoyed our small gathering. As I headed home, I wondered what happened to the other two women. My only recourse was to follow-up again and to inform Toni about the attendance.

On Saturday morning one of the women, B, called to apologize for her absence on Friday evening. B stated she did not have the car fare, although she knew she would receive a metro card, which would get her home and allow her to return to the next class. B continued to explain that she wished to attend the next class. I welcomed her, however requested that she call or text me on Tuesday morning to confirm her attendance. B agreed to call, then also thanked me for allowing her to participate after missing two classes. While I appreciated that B contacted me to explain her reasons for missing the class, I felt somewhat doubtful that she really wanted to participate. I knew that I would reconcile my misgivings by Tuesday evening.

Tuesday October 25, 2016 arrived and we were prepared to deliver the third class. B did not contact me, nor did she appear, only L returned, predictably arriving on time at 5pm. We had dinner, and she gave me her "Reflection" write-up of the Introduction to Theology Session. The Reflection was hand written, yet I appreciated that she honored my request. L asked a few

questions related to the prior class to which Lance and I responded. In compliance with our 5:30pm start time, we began the “First Testament and Biblical Exegesis” segment. Again, L was the sole participant; she was fully engaged making comments and asking questions during this discourse. We ended on time at 7pm; L accepted her Metro card and confirmed her attendance for Session Four the following day. Although L was engaged throughout each session, and Lance and I enjoyed working with her, I was somewhat distracted and not completely satisfied that I did not have the full complement of attendance I expected. It was difficult to accept that I was unable to gain commitment from the other women to participate in my program.

On Wednesday October 26, 2016, not yet accepting the setback, I contacted B to determine why she did not attend the class. She stated she did not feel well, so she remained at home. She asked if I planned another program and, if so, she wished to attend. I told her to focus on getting well and we would speak in more detail at another time. That evening L arrived for session four, which covered the Second Testament and a continuation of the Exegesis material. L. returned for the final three sessions; she provided Reflections on most of the material we covered. The remaining sessions were Tuesday November, 1- “Church History”, Thursday November 3, “Women and Leadership”, and Saturday, November 5- “Pastoral Care”.

On November 5, 2016, at the last session, L informed me that she planned to schedule a meeting with the NYTS recruiter to discuss enrolling in the Certificate program. L shared that she was motivated by the material covered in class to continue her studies in Christian/Theological education. I thanked L for her steadfastness and participation throughout the two-week Pilot program. On this last day of class, we awarded L a Certificate of Completion for her participation and commitment (See Appendix I). As a final requirement, she completed an evaluation of the TEL Pilot program (See Appendices J and K). In her evaluation, L stated

that she enjoyed all of the sessions and would have appreciated even more. I invited L to attend my next Pilot in December.

L was a model student for the TEL Pilot program: she was punctual, courteous, listened well and asked questions when she did not understand the course material. Her “Reflections” were hand-written, and brief, yet I believe she provided genuine feedback on the topics we covered in each session. The other instructors echoed this experience while working with L. Although I taught the majority of the classes, L did not appear to have issues with the other instructors’ presence.

While I worked with L in the sessions, I continued recruitment efforts with the assistance of Terry, Toni and a few others. In this effort, because Terry and Toni were intricately connected to the incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women’s communities, I relied on their lead. Terry reported that many of her contacts were involved in other endeavors and, thus, could not commit to attending seven or eight sessions. Toni also shared that she believed that many of the women, especially in her program, might have held pre-conceived ideas and assumed the Pilot program would consist of stereotyped religious dogma with messages of negativity, exclusivity, and judgments against women with prison and addiction labels. Toni shared that whenever she heard those type of comments, she would immediately defend the TEL Pilot program and inform them that it advocates and instructs inclusive, affirming, loving and supportive messages from God to all people. We all committed to continue the recruitment efforts for my next planned Pilot program.

To help me accomplish my plan, in November, I met with Stevie’s contact, Ms. R., a director of a woman’s shelter in upper Manhattan. Ms. R. told me that she believed my project was a good idea, however, she wanted me to present my Pilot to the women in a face-to-face

forum. I agreed to present the program at the shelter; unfortunately, due to regulations, Ms. R could offer me one evening for two hours only. Although this option was not feasible, it was okay because I still had access to a group room at NYTS. The following week, I presented the Pilot program at the women's shelter and gave each woman a TEL brochure (See Appendix L). After the presentation, several women expressed interest in participating in the Pilot. I announced the TEL pilot scheduled for December and invited their participation.

I left the women's shelter with renewed confidence that perhaps there really were women who might be interested in attending the Pilot program. It was at that time that I adjusted the Pilot program to an overview of five courses instead of eight. This now required a one-day commitment, in which the participants would submit to a survey of five classes and would receive the same meal plan and transportation costs.

The December 3, 2016 TEL Pilot program, that had registered four participants, was ready to kick off at 9am and end at 3pm. The same attendance scenario was repeated; no one showed up. Coincidentally, this Saturday was also an NYTS Resource Day for D.Min. students. My project and this no-show phenomenon became the focus of the discussion. I expressed my frustration and disappointment with my thwarted attempt to bring these women together. I informed the other D. Min students that, while I had the assistance and support of two formerly incarcerated women this situation still exists. My D.Min cohorts, along with the professor expressed their thoughts and ideas of what variables might be affecting my project.

What happened on December 3, 2016 created questions for which I had no answers. I was unable to comprehend why these women did not follow through with their initial decision to participate in my TEL Pilot program. I began to review the communications leading up this event; the formal presentations, the phone conversations and text messages, the meetings I held,

throughout this period, the women's acknowledgment of their interest in the program. They articulated their desire to Terry, Toni and me that they wished to learn theological concepts. Yet only one person, L, attended the TEL Pilot program and participated in each session. I should mention here, that Terry and Toni wanted to participate, but, unfortunately, their full time class schedules precluded a commitment to this effort. Based upon L's feedback, coupled with the evidence of her consistency, it was clear that she enjoyed each session and she expanded her knowledge of ministry and theology. L revealed that the new information she acquired in those sessions motivated her to consider applying to the NYTS Certificate in Christian Ministry program. L's reactions and feedback were consistent with the research and with my expectations. Although I was able to persuade only one woman to attend the TEL program, I continued to believe that access to Christian education and theology can provide transformational benefits to its students-L's participation symbolizes this assessment.

The Theological Education and Leadership Pilot program utilizes "Action Research" (AR) as a form of Qualitative Research. Action Research has three main components integral to the research: "Look", gather data and/or describe what occurs; "Think", analyze and interpret the data obtained; "Act", develop or implement a plan, then evaluate the action taken.¹²¹ Stringer's definition of Action Research requires the researcher to work in a cycle throughout the extent of the project. Each plan/action taken will result in more data gathering, more analyzing, more planning, thus leading to new plans and new actions. The research project is fluid because it is a project that focuses on people and how they live their lives. I reviewed the TEL Pilot program from the lens of Action Research. In doing so, I gathered and analyzed documentation of meetings, phone calls, and emails that related to the TEL Pilot program, and used the results in

¹²¹ Ernest T. Stringer, *Action Research, Third Edition*. (Thousand Oaks , California: Sage Publications, Inc., 2007): 8.

my planning process. So, after each session with L., and after each scheduled Pilot event that did not happen, I used the same methodology to create on-going evaluations. These evaluations were developed through conversations with the stakeholders: Site Team, Terry and Toni (the women with an incarceration background who assisted with recruitment and planning), D.Min advisor, NYTS D.Min director, Judson Pastor, and others – all who recognized and embraced the value of the TEL Pilot and its overall curriculum.

All of the facets of the TEL Pilot were appropriately studied as part of the Action Research model. However, Stringer provides additional insight about Action Research which I believe must be considered when operating from the AR model. He asserts, “The procedures that follow (I assume he is referring to AR) are likely to be ineffective, however, unless enacted in ways that take into account the social, cultural, interactional, and emotional factors that affect all human activity.”¹²² This is Stringer’s explanation about the importance of knowing one’s audience in tangible ways. As such, he enlightens researchers to be intentional about acquiring relevant information about the subjects of their studies. Stringer’s assertion created a reaction in me; I began to analyze the variables Stringer identified and, I realized I did not know my audience as well as I thought I did. In my analysis, I had to add my recollection that I did not account for the cultural, social, and, in many instances, collaborative aspects. For example, I believed that Terry and Toni, and the literature I amassed through my research was sufficient to validate my research about women who had been incarcerated. In hindsight, I came to realize that if I had studied this community of women in greater detail, it is likely that my Pilot project would have yielded different results.

¹²² Stringer, *Action Research*, 9.

CASE STUDY

My D. Min project, Theological Education and Leadership (TEL) Curriculum/Pilot program is designed to address the absence of access afforded to incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women to obtain a Christian/theological education. Current research has enlightened how studying ministry and theology can generate positive and transformative results especially for people in marginalized communities. Opportunities to study the biblical texts and theological doctrines have been documented to increase spiritual growth, develop a relationship with God, and inspire changes in attitude and behaviors. Therefore, obtaining a theological education establishes new individual and interpersonal insights for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women, who because of their history, oftentimes believe they are not welcomed and are un-noticed in many circles. The TEL Pilot provides women access to an area of study that has, to date, not been available to them.

The qualitative research method I used to study the TEL Pilot was the Case Study. Researcher Professor Tim Sensing identifies case studies as writings generated from a compilation of interviews, observed behaviors, and other documents developed into one story.¹²³ Taking into account Professor Sensing's definition, the case study is an appropriate research that I can apply when examining the outcomes of the Pilot project. It is appropriate because I am able to include and explore all facets of L's experience in the TEL Pilot. Professor Sensing, along with one of his sources, establishes two additional claims regarding the effectiveness of Case Study research. He states, "The name *case study* is emphasized by some of us because it

¹²³ Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011): 143.

draws attention to the question of what specifically can be learned from the single case. That epistemological question is the driving question of this chapter: What can be learned from the single case? Most case study methods emphasize explaining or describing an event, program, or setting. I advocate an evaluation of an intervention that encourages transformation.”¹²⁴ Sensing’s claims support what I attempted to ascertain from the case study. I believe I will learn significant information from L’s experience in the TEL Pilot program. The data gathered and compiled from L will reveal outcomes that she has expressed. As Sensing stated, this case study will provide the answer to the question, “what can be learned?”. The case study will also explore whether or not aspects of transformation were included in the outcome.

THE INTERVIEW

To learn more about her, and to discuss her reasons for participating in the TEL Pilot program, I sat down with L in a room at New York Theological Seminary. L began by informing me that she grew up in the Methodist church. While she enjoyed attending church services, she always had questions regarding the preacher’s sermons, but no one provided her with answers. However, it was in the Methodist church that she began a relationship with God. As L became older, she discontinued attendance at the Methodist church. While she was aware of His existence, L did not cultivate her relationship with God until later in life. She shared that she was employed in construction for many years; for her this was gainful employment. She stated that she experienced two difficult and life-changing events that created many problems in her life. Addiction was a major problem; drug use resulted in a two-year incarceration stint. In both situations, L states that her life was in disarray. Once released from prison, L enrolled in a drug treatment program which helped her abstain from further drug use. And, she believes that her

¹²⁴ Ibid., 142.

prison experience, coupled with her drug addiction forced her to “Start my life over; I had to rebuild, which starts from within.” L maintains a connection to the 12-Steps community which helps her to remain focused on sobriety. Disclosing that her incarceration experience made a lasting impression on her, she does not intend to repeat the illegal activities because she does not wish to return to the prison experience.

L admits that she came to the TEL Pilot program with what she coins, “I came with a resentment. I did not want to be there; I did not know what to expect. In addition, I had bitterness and was depressed.” L felt depressed and angry because she was hosting a house guest, who was a good friend that needed a place to stay to heal from a recent surgery. This houseguest was verbally negative about everything in her life. Night and day she complained, which created anxiety and discomfort for L in her own home. L was unable to ask her to leave because the houseguest had no other place to go. Although L had these personal issues with which to contend, she, nonetheless, came to the Pilot program because she committed to Toni. L shared that, during the first session, she experienced feelings of calm and “felt a release of baggage; and was able to shed negative energy”. Further, she stated, in the first class she heard things differently and she found the one-on-one experience to be powerful. She soon became a willing participant and returned early for each session. As the only participant in the TEL program, L revealed, “I felt like I was in a candy store; I wanted to get as much as I could get.” Believing that she was in a safe space, she declared, “every session, my spirit got stronger; God has me open.” When I asked her to explain how God has her ‘open’, she said that she was able to engage in listening more and increase her patience- become more “mellow”. She was able to “solidify her faith through the classes.” Her attitude and behavior changed. She learned to be as humble as possible, and to put God first. Learning to incorporate God in everything, and putting

God first, helped L to get through her days. She desired to become God-centered and to display attributes of God.

When I asked L for a critique of the sessions, she stated that she enjoyed the Introduction session especially looking at the scriptures through “New Lens”, which pays attention to the contributions and involvement of women throughout the 1st and 2nd Testaments. L found the Pastoral Care session to be helpful; she believed it was important to develop emphatic listening skills. The Church History segment was overwhelming; there were too many handouts and too much information crammed into two hours. While she appreciated receiving the information, it was too difficult to digest because it was simply too much detail. L stated that this is the only class that she believes needs to be revised. For L, coming to the classes gave her something to do, that was just for her, which she enjoyed doing. L also declared writing a “Reflection” after each session gave her opportunities to express her thoughts and opinions, which she appreciated.

L revealed her plans to enroll in school at Hostos College to study Community Health. However, L wished to enroll in the NYTS Certificate in Christian Education to continue learning Christian and theological principles.

Overall, L reports the TEL Pilot experience was beneficial; she appreciated receiving a certificate for attending and completing the Pilot program. She stated further that she informed her pastor and her friends about her experience and the information she learned while participating in the TEL program.

My interview with L answered the question, ‘what can be learned from a single interview’. L’s answers throughout the interview revealed the TEL Pilot made an impact; she disclosed the material she learned influenced and inspired her to modify her thinking and her

behavior. L's experience in the TEL Pilot confirms the research that claims positive transformation is a direct product of learning Christian and theological principles

CHAPTER 5

MINISTERIAL COMPETENCIES

I) RELIGIOUS EDUCATOR: Challenges the hearer to discover new resources within herself or himself and others. She or he invites others to a new and more spiritually enlightened consciousness about self and society.

I was able to employ two strategies to assist me in building my competence as a Religious Educator. First, I researched and became knowledgeable of current literature that speaks to effective teaching methods for women. I discovered the importance of providing safe and affirming teaching environments for women, especially those who are marginalized. Accepting and respecting one's opinions and beliefs assists in creating a supportive environment in which students feel validated and open to free and authentic expression. As a religious educator, I understood the significance of acknowledging the life lessons that students, especially women, bring to the classroom setting. Their experiences are unique and worthwhile, and sharing these events is integral to the class discussions. To be able to offer their voice, and to be apprised of its value, sends a message to women that they, too, are valued.

I consulted with two experienced educators, that teach women in prison, to assist me with assessing my competence as a Religious Educator. The first one teaches an onsite Liberal Arts program; the other an onsite certificate program for women. Both concur with the importance of creating safe, respectful, and welcoming environments that encourage students to speak openly. These educators reaffirmed the importance that all instructors of adult learners need to possess the skills required to successfully teach women who come from marginalized communities. As a Religious Educator, I was particularly interested in the comments from the theology professor. He informed me of the need to ensure the women are able to integrate information they gather

from these classes into their own experiences. He added that the curriculum must include topics that involve or occupy the students' interests. These two suggestions were invaluable to me as I understood that using them while teaching had the potential to engage the students and enhance class discussions.

When I evaluate the Religious Educator competency, I am able to state that I accomplished my goal. I obtained useful and appropriate knowledge in this area, which I was able to utilize in my TEL Pilot program.

II) SPIRITUAL LEADER: To become grounded in spiritual disciplines and regularly exercising personal spiritual practices.

To accomplish this goal, I devoted time to weekly prayer. Each morning I set aside time to pray and became intentional in utilizing this time. In addition, I viewed, listened to and read affirming literature and sermons as spiritual practices. All of these practices kept me grounded especially during the duration of the D.Min process. Having the technology and the opportunity to view affirming sermons lifted my spirits whenever I experienced emotional challenges and setbacks. Praying daily helped me to maintain a solid foundation on my connection to God and my belief in God's connection to me. Therefore, I did not remain "down" for protracted periods; my prayer life and my involvement in the other spiritual disciplines brought me back to what I knew to be truth- I knew whatever I was going through, whatever obstacle I was facing, God had it under control.

To increase my proficiency as a Spiritual Leader, I exploited my second strategy to attend weekly church services. It is my usual practice to attend church regularly; I gain spiritual strength as I find the music, the singing, the sermons and the interactions to be affirming and uplifting. Although I admit that, at times, I view several churches via live stream, however,

unless there are extenuating circumstances like bad weather, illness, or I am writing my dissertation at home, I attend Sunday church services.

Evaluating this competence leads me to confess that I did not always document each time I prayed or perused affirming literature. Yet, my attendance at church is noted; in fact, my absence is also noted as evidenced by a recent telephone call I received from a parishioner who inquired about my absence.

III) PROFESSIONAL: Demonstrates the importance of professionalism in regards to managing time and practicing self- care.

This last competency is very important to me both personally and professionally. This year I became diligent about placing all of my appointments in my phone calendar, then accessed it daily to assist me with time management. I began, also, to keep a prioritized “To Do List” that I used as a living document to track and support my activities and tasks that were time-sensitive. I found that, as I became more and more diligent in documenting my appointments and referencing my calendar, I decreased missed appointments and increased my ability to utilize my time effectively.

Amongst the lessons I learned, while building my “To Do” list, was that I needed to include my personal activities such as weekly workouts and other self-fulfilling or necessary obligations. These entries to my list represented necessary strategies that augmented the self-care aspect of the Professional competency. For example, scheduling my days to exercise was conveying a message to me that my exercises and personal time were as critical as the other items on my To Do List. I really began to realize the importance of self-care even when my schedule is full.

My success around this competency requires that 75% of my “To Do” list must be completed within the established deadlines. On average, I have been able to complete 66%, or

two-thirds of the tasks that I schedule. I am making changes that will enable me to improve my time management skills such as conducting a deeper assessment and prioritization of my work, and by delegating responsibility where possible.

CHAPTER 6 EVALUATION

My demonstration project, Theological Education and Leadership Curriculum (TEL) entails building an educational program that aligns with the needs of formerly incarcerated women who wish to pursue a theological education. According to many research reports, access to onsite theological education has proved to be transformative and beneficial to members of the incarcerated community and their stakeholders. This research reveals further that women with criminal backgrounds receive minimal attention to their needs and concerns. It is evident that, while women may be the fastest growing population that enters the prison system, the major focus and support is still directed towards incarcerated and formerly incarcerated men. It is for this reason that I chose, as my D.Min demonstration project, to develop a theological educational program that generates spiritual and transformative benefits to women with a prison background.

A closer examination will reveal that I created a “Pilot” of my TEL curriculum that served as an introduction to transformative aspects of Christian education. This provided an overview for this group of women to gain an understanding of the program I designed on their behalf. The TEL curriculum is comprised of eight two-hour classes that cover Biblical, historical, theological and practical studies with an intentional focus on the participation and contributions of women throughout the Bible.

Outcomes

With the assistance of my Site Team I developed a two-week Pilot of my demonstration project. This pilot included an introductory survey of the eight courses in the TEL curriculum. We produced marketing materials such as handouts and flyers as information media for potential participants. In addition, we held weekly and monthly meetings during the development phase

of my demonstration project; our primary communication vehicles were email and telephone meetings. Also, we invited two formerly incarcerated women to consult with us as we developed the pilot program; one became a Site Team member. I asked three M.Div graduates to become volunteer instructors. All agreed to teach one class each, therefore, I would teach the remaining five. I then secured a budget for the teaching supplies, food, transportation and stipends for the instructors. We secured the training venue, which was a group room at NYTS. Thus, my goal to develop the Pilot program for my demonstration project was completed.

Initially, I believed that recruiting women to participate in the Pilot program would run smoothly. I worked directly with two women who were closely connected to formerly incarcerated women. My individual meetings with both women were encouraging and productive as each woman believed in the benefits of my demonstration project. From their vantage point, incarcerated female communities needed theological education programs that would provide tools and processes that would enable them to address their spiritual concerns. Also, I was involved in the recruitment phase that entailed meeting with organizational leaders to obtain approval for the Pilot program.

When the TEL Pilot began, one of the women participants referred three of her contacts to the program. Yet another woman was unable to make a reference. My recruitment efforts were not fruitful. In actuality one woman, L attended all the sessions. She participated in each session: she asked questions, listened attentively, and provided “Reflection” write ups of each sessions. At the end of the Pilot, L completed an evaluation. She then subjected herself to an interview in which she provided positive feedback. We awarded her a certificate of completion for the Pilot which was consistent with my research and expectations. (See Case Study) L

reported ultimately that the biblical and theological principles she learned encouraged her to consider enrolling in the NYTS Certificate in Christian Education program.

I have mixed feelings regarding the evaluation results of the TEL Pilot program. I believed the goal was reached with L because her commitment and participation in each session demonstrated that she experienced positive benefits. In this sense, I believe the goal of the TEL Curriculum and Pilot program was met.

However, the contents of the recruitment phase became a real concern and, thus, needs to be re-assessed. I have had plenty of time to think, analyze, act; then think, analyze, and act again. After navigating this exercise, I made three key observations: (1) the TEL curriculum should be held at women's sites or in locations where women live. In this way, more women will be able to participate because of easy access; (2) the budget for the TEL program must include a financial incentive (such as gift cards) for each participant. Although my TEL Pilot included dinner/lunch and a two-fare metro card, more of a financial incentive is needed, which I believe might increase participation; (3) designate more recruitment time. People and bureaucratic processes tend to be slow-paced; relationships must be established before any movement can take place, then appropriate time and focus must be allotted to this phase of the program development.

NEXT STEPS

Overall, the TEL Pilot produced the intended outcome, although we used a small population of one person, it appears to be a viable program that, going forward, can be continued with few revisions. The lack of access to theological education for the target population remains a need to be addressed. The TEL program has the necessary content and processes to address these needs appropriately and adequately.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A DMIN PROPOSAL

CLASS IS NOW IN SESSION: FEMALE INMATES OBTAIN MINISTRY EDUCATION

By
VALERIE H. HOLLY

A DEMONSTRATION PROJECT PROPOSAL

New York Theological Seminary

February 1, 2016

Challenge Statement

As a Community Minister at Judson Memorial Church located in Manhattan with its history of advocating for the underserved, I learned of the lack of onsite theological education afforded to New York State female inmates. Data reveals theological education offered to N.Y.S. male offenders yield positive results for the participants, thus women need the opportunity for similar outcomes. My demonstration project will create a curriculum that introduces women to Christian/theological education.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE SETTING

I am currently a Community Minister at Judson Memorial Church. I have been attending Judson Memorial Church since September 2013. As a Community Minister, my duties are varied. I represent Judson Memorial Church at faith based and community based meetings and or conferences throughout New York City. I participate with Judson's Sanctuaries for Families program which provides onsite spiritual support to immigrants who face potential deportation proceedings from Immigration officials. I preside over memorials, Judson events, and I provide pastoral care. In addition, I attend weekly Judson staff meetings, and when needed, I participate in administrative duties.

Judson Memorial Church is located in the West Village in the borough of Manhattan, where it has been in existence since 1890. Judson is a member of two denominations: American Baptist Churches and United Church of Christ. Judson was developed initially to provide a twofold purpose: to establish a place of worship and to address the social and health needs of Italian immigrants who lived in lower Manhattan. In the early 1950s, Judson Memorial Church expanded the purpose of the church, to become, "a faith-based institution that responds to the societal issues of its time and place by working and advocating for progressive change – with special attention to the needs of people that many mainstream churches tend to overlook or find 'undeserving'¹. Thus, ministry for Judson clergy meant a conviction to help the women and men that other churches chose not to assist. Judson's ministry has always maintained this dual focus, which was to provide spiritual guidance and to address the needs of those who were

¹ History of Judson Memorial Church, [http://www.Judson..org/Historical Overview](http://www.Judson..org/Historical%20Overview) (accessed June 29, 2015).

marginalized or “left out”. In many ways Judson’s theology was a demonstration of Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s theology. Bonhoeffer believed God gave the church the role and the responsibility to address the needs of the community especially the needs of the marginalized². For Bonhoeffer and also for Dr. Martin L. King, Jr., it is the church’s duty to advocate for those in need or those who are being unfairly treated. Judson’s mission is further supported through their understanding of Matthew 25:35-40. When we feed, clothe, visit, and advocate for the “least of these”, then we are following God’s mandate to provide care and support to those in need. After 125 years, Judson remains committed to the needs of the underserved and the marginalized: they are intentionally and closely involved with immigration reform, reproductive justice, and plight of low wage workers, violence against minorities, violence against women (which includes human trafficking), gay bashing, and education reform. Judson Memorial Church remains a house of worship open to all people: it continues to concentrate on people that are overlooked and causes that are unjust and inhumane. Judson Memorial Church identifies as a “church that’s a little bit different making a big difference”.

My demonstration project will require me to establish a working relationship with the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility (BHCF) for female offenders, which is a maximum security prison located in Westchester County, New York. According to Jane Maher (an educator with teaching experience at Bedford Hills), Bedford Hills is a women’s prison that is deemed a progressive correctional facility. It is thought to be progressive because Bedford Hills offers the female inmates educational and counseling opportunities.³ The female inmates are encouraged to

² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* [New York: MacMillan, 1953] 503.

³ Jane Maher, “You Probably Don’t Know I Exist: Notes From A College Prison Program”, *Journal of Basic Writing*: Spring 2004, 23, 1, ProQuest Research Library, 83. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, ERIC host (accessed June 29, 2015).

take advantage of the different types of educational and training programs available to them. Especially the women who are in need of substance abuse services and or are survivors of domestic violence or sexual abuse, they are required to attend these programs. Maher reports that a volunteer at Bedford Hills stated that, “Bedford Hills is a prison, of course”, she noted, ‘but it is less of a prison because women are still being encouraged to think, to change, and to hope.’⁴ These are inspiring statements detailing Bedford Hills’ history of recognizing the need and the importance of supporting the educational and training desires of female inmates. It is my expectation that my Demonstration project will be welcomed as another important educational component to be available to the female offenders at the Bedford Hills Correctional facility.

To increase the success of my Demonstration project, which is to create at Bedford Hills an onsite certificate program in theological education, I will need the assistance of New York Theological Seminary Eleanor Moody –Shepherd Resource Center for Women in Ministry and the NYTS Certificate program in Christian Ministry. The Eleanor Moody- Shepherd Resource Center, formerly known as The Resource Center for Women in Ministry, has since 1986 provided a variety of programs, conferences, learning experiences, and fellowship events designed to support lay and ordained women in ministry at NYTS and in the churches. The Resource Center serves as an organizing forum for concerns and needs of women within the NYTS constituency. In its mission to facilitate dialogue among women in ministry, the EMS Women’s Resource Center pays particular attention to women’s ministries in a variety of cultural contexts, including from the African diaspora, European-American, Korean, and Latina. The Center hosts monthly gatherings throughout the course of the school year, and in June of each year, sponsors one or more intensive courses and a women’s conference. Programs of the Center

⁴ Jane Maher, 85.

are open to both men and women.⁵

The NYTS Certificate Program in Christian Education is a non-degree course of study that provides a basic theological education suitable for both lay and ordained church leaders. CP welcomes applications from women and men who possess a high school diploma or its equivalent, who seek to increase in both biblical literacy and spiritual understanding, and who desire to be better prepared for ministry. The curriculum covers the basic theological disciplines of Biblical, historical, theological and practical studies, and many of the classes are taught by graduates of NYTS degree programs. The NYTS Certificate program has a diverse array of students from individuals with high school education to students with graduate and Ph. D degrees. The Certificate program is accredited, thus it offers credits to Bachelor degree programs.

The NYTS Eleanor Moody- Shepherd Women's Resource Center and the NYTS Certificate program will collaborate with me to identify and furnish the professional components required to create a certificate program in Christian education, which will be offered to the women inmates in the Bedford Hills Correctional facility.

⁵ New York Theological Seminary, <http://www.newyorktheologicalseminary.edu> (accessed June 29, 2015).

CHAPTER 2

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

As a Community Minister at Judson Memorial Church located in Manhattan with its history of advocating for the underserved, I learned of the lack of onsite theological education afforded to New York State female inmates. Data reveals theological education offered to N.Y.S. male offenders yield positive results for the participants, thus women need the opportunity for similar outcomes. My demonstration project will create a curriculum that introduces women to Christian/ theological education.

The problem that I selected to address is the lack of opportunity for female inmates in to obtain onsite theological education. For more than thirty years onsite educational programs in ministry, through New York Theological Seminary, has been in existence and made available to New York State incarcerated males in the Sing Sing Correctional Facility. Data gathered throughout the years speaks to the positive results experienced by the male inmates and other stakeholders: Correction staff, teachers, other inmates, significant others. Professor Erickson reports that a 1996 survey of Sing Sing alum states, “alumni reported the changes brought about by contact with the faculty and through expanding their education to be “personal life changes.” They learned how to build community, develop their faith and construct helpful spiritual practices.”⁶ Professor Erickson further reports that the male offenders who participated in the onsite NYTS educational program have, “....encountered community and have created friendships that hold them accountable to “moral living.” They extend this accountability to themselves inside and outside of prison. The

⁶ Victoria Lee Erickson, “Social Theory, Sacred Text, and Sing Sing Prison: A Sociology of Community Based Reconciliation.” T. O’Connor and N.J. Pallone, Eds. Religion, the Community, and the Rehabilitation of Criminal Offenders. New York: Hawthorne Press, 2002, 239.

skills they credit to their empowerment are: the ability to *restructure* their lives, *motivate* themselves and others, *create and maintain* values through new networks of supportive people and through rooting this transformation in a wisdom *source.*⁷ This Sing Sing report indicates positive outcomes that appeared to be beneficial to all the stakeholders. Recidivism rates and internal conflicts were and positive behaviors were increased. Thus a comparable program should be made available to incarcerated women affording them and their stakeholders the opportunity to obtain similar benefits from an onsite education in theological education. The development of this program would establish opportunities of ministerial learning for interested and qualified incarcerated women. Affording the female inmates the opportunity to enroll and complete a Certificate in Christian Ministry while in Bedford Hills Correctional facility would be consistent with Bedford Hills' commitment to providing needed and diverse onsite educational programs. Educator Jane Maher states that creating an educational program in prison is significant because, "it brings the women together as a community of learners, not as isolated inmates struggling to survive in a system that is at best unpredictable and all too often cruel and degrading."⁸ Maher further states that educational programs in prisons, "help these women overcome a pervading sense of not belonging, of not being worthy of attention, of not having a voice, a place, a future."⁹ Michelle Fine, another educator / researcher familiar with educational programs for female offenders supports and extends Maher's assertion. Fine states that in 2001 the Department of Corrections conducted a study which, " documents a 7.7%

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Jane Maher, "My Way Out of This Life is an Education", *Women's Quarterly*; Spring 2004; 32(ProQuest Research Library): 112. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, ERIChost (accessed June 30, 2015).

⁹ Jane Maher, "You Probably Don't Know I Exist: Notes From A College Prison Program", *Journal of Basic Writing*: Spring 2004, 23, 1, (ProQuest Research Library: 89. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, ERIC host (accessed June 29, 2015).

reincarceration rate over 36 months for women with college, compared to a 29.9% reincarceration rate for women without college. College in prison reduces reincarceration rates, reduces crime,..."¹⁰ Both Maher and Fine establish compelling arguments for the existence of educational programs in women's correctional facilities, especially because of the beneficial outcomes for all stakeholders (the female offenders and the DOC). It is expected that this onsite certificate program in theological education will also yield favorable results to the female inmates. It is projected that the curriculum would prove to be effective and favorable enough to all the stakeholders that it would be implemented and or replicated in other appropriate arenas.

Because this will be a new venture in the educational programs offered to women in a New York State prison, it will most likely require extensive communication and openness to programmatic adjustments. It will require collaboration between several different and independent entities: the Correctional system, the female inmates, the seminary professors, and the current onsite educators providing other educational services. It will require patience and a willingness, on my part, to communicate with entities that have their process and are committed to their process- which means any type of change or adjustment, will not be an easy task.

Another area that requires attention is the question of determining funding for this program: who will want to fund an accredited educational program in ministry for incarcerated females; who will see the value in this type of program? These are all questions that must be and will be discussed with my Site Team and other interested individuals. I anticipate initially obtaining the qualified instructors for the certificate program from the Eleanor Moody-Shepherd Resource Center for Women in Ministry. This resource will provide me with access to women and men

¹⁰ M. Fine, M. Torre, K. Boudin, I. Bowen, J. Clark, D. Hylton, M. Martinez, "Missy", R. Roberts, P. Smart, & D. Upequi. *Changing minds: The Impact of college in a maximum security prison*. 4. Final Report, Graduate Center, CUNY, 2001. Available: <http://www.changingminds.ws>.

with the appropriate credentials and the willingness to volunteer to teach the female inmates in the Bedford Hills Correctional facility. Establishing a group of willing and able instructors will afford me the opportunity to begin this project while I investigate funding options.

Regarding the target group, I anticipate interest in this new program once it becomes available to them. Obviously, there needs to be a system developed to gauge the incarcerated women's interest or lack thereof in participating in this type of onsite educational program in ministry. Therefore course evaluations will be available to each student. The curriculum will include learning in theological, biblical, historical, and interpersonal areas that would prove to be valuable to the women. Completion of the Certificate program in Theological Education will not only generate personal satisfaction, it will also provide students with credits towards Associate and or Baccalaureate degrees.

Due to the new nature of this program combined with all of the different stakeholders (I should call them entities, because all of the entities involved may not be stakeholders), there will be potential challenges. Bedford Hills is a correctional facility that is certainly progressive; however it is still a prison. Which means rules and guidelines must be adhered to. The instructors and the inmates must respect all aspects of the Bedford Hills process - if we want the program granted permission to exist. Bedford Hills' guidelines include time of program operation, who attends, and where it is held; their format also includes approval of all teaching staff and the supplies.¹¹ Every aspect of the program will be scrutinized by the Bedford Hills Correctional staff. Obviously safety for the female inmates and for the instructors is paramount. Therefore the need for the strict following of the rules and guidelines can be understood because they are safety precautions for everyone's benefit.

¹¹ Maher, 86.

CHAPTER 3 **PLAN OF IMPLEMENTATION**

Goals and Strategies

Goal 1 To raise awareness to the three stakeholders: Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS), Marymount Manhattan College, and New York Theological Seminary of the value of providing New York State female inmates the opportunity to obtain an onsite certificate in Christian Ministry and Leadership.

Strategy 1 Dialogue with key DOCCS, Marymount , and NYTS personnel to discuss the potential merit of allowing the certificate in Ministry to exist at BHCF.
(March 2016, Holly)

Strategy 2 Obtain data that informs the stakeholders of the potential benefits to providing education in ministry to incarcerated persons. (February 2016, Holly)

Evaluation of Goal 1: Identification and initial dialogue with key DOCCS, Marymount Manhattan College, and NYTS personnel pertaining to D. Min project.

Goal 2 To develop a team of supporters to assist me with the development of the D. Min project.

Strategy 1 Develop criteria for selection of team of supporters.

(March, 2016, Holly, Site Team)

Strategy 2 Determine appropriate time frames to meet individually and collectively with team of supporters to discuss their involvement with D. Min project.

(March 2016, Holly, Site Team)

Strategy 3 Establish on-going bi-weekly and monthly meetings with team of supporters. (March 2016 - April 2017, Holly, Site Team)

Evaluation of Goal 2: Creation of Team of Supporters to assist in the development of the D. Min project.

Goal 3 The Team and I will utilize and amend the existing NYTS certificate in Christian Ministry curriculum to include Leadership Skills for female inmates in BHCF.

Strategy 1 Collaborate with key NYTS staff to create the theological curriculum for a certificate in Christian Ministry.
(February –March 2016, Holly, NYTS, Site Team)

Strategy 2 Create the additional sociological/ psychological component of the

curriculum that will specifically focus on building leadership and interpersonal skills for women.

(February – March 2016, Holly and Site Team)

Strategy 3 Develop a questionnaire to be distributed to female inmates in BHCF to ascertain interest in acquiring certificate in Ministry and Leadership. (March 2016, Holly, Site Team)

Strategy 4 Launch pilot class in BHCF with identified female inmates who are deemed appropriate for this project. (April 2016, Holly, Site Team)

Evaluation of Goal 3 Completion of curriculum for Certificate program for female inmates in BHCF.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Historical / (Political)

What has been the history of the value of onsite accredited programs in ministry afforded to New York State male offenders? Can an onsite accredited program in Christian education in Bedford Hills Correctional Facility create similar levels of individual and organizational success?

For the past thirty years Sing Sing, a male Correctional facility in New York State, has developed several accredited programs in Christian education that has proven to be beneficial on many levels. The ability to have equal access to an education in America oftentimes creates opportunities that benefit the student, their family, and all who are involved with the student.

Biblical / Theological

What biblical significance does the Gospel of Luke 4:18 (NRSV) provide to the issue of offering onsite certificate in Christian Ministry & Leadership to female offenders? How does Liberation Theology (Gustavo Gutierrez), Womanist Theology (Jacqueline Grant, Delores Williams) and Jürgen Moltmann combine with the biblical texts to provide theological support to this project?

This biblical text speaks to the ability to be affirmed and transformed through receiving and embracing God's words. The scripture coupled with the theologians' message of love, support, and hope in God / Jesus has the potential to be sources of positive options to the participants.

Sociological

What curriculums are designed to address the leadership skills and the multiple areas affecting women that have proven to be effective?

The inclusion of leadership skills for women will address the importance increasing personal and interpersonal credibility through strengthening self-image, learning conflict resolution techniques, and developing time management skills.

CHAPTER 5 EVALUATION

According to Professor Tim Sensing the Evaluation section in a Doctor of Ministry, “.... involves choosing a meaningful way to assess the effects of your project compared to the goals you set out to reach. Evaluation allows you to get inside the mind of the folks and determine the effectiveness of the intervention.”¹² Sensing states further that the data collection methods chosen to ascertain an evaluation of my D. Min project must be specific to the intervention selected and must document, “what people experienced: their reactions, behavior changes, and/or organizational impact, etc.”¹³ Taking into account Sensing’s description of the evaluation process, the evaluation process that I will use for my Demonstration Project will be comprised of observational, written and interview data. I will be using “qualitative interviews, documents and observations” to develop the evaluation. I will conduct phone interviews and face to face meetings with Bedford Hills Correctional and educational staff. I will also conduct face to face meetings with New York Theological Seminary staff. These interviews will be un-structured and include open ended questions. Emails will also be utilized as another mode of communication and evaluation of the D. Min. project. The face to face meetings will occur at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility and NYTS. Regarding the female inmates at Bedford Hills Correctional facility, a member of the Site Team and I, will conduct interviews through the use of a questionnaire with the women who are interested in participating in this onsite accredited program in theological education. The content of the questionnaire will focus on the female inmates church and educational background, current involvement in educational programs in

¹² Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research, A Multi- Methods Approach to Prospects for Doctor of Ministry Theses*. [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2011]70.

¹³ Sensing, 71.

Bedford Hills Correctional Facility, and the reasons why they are interested in enrolling in the Certificate in Theology program. As the researcher, I am responsible for conducting and documenting all of the interviews- however, there will be a Site Team member involved with the in-depth interviews with the women.

Sensing asserts that the evaluation process has the opportunity to be successful with more than the researcher's angle (for data collection) involved. Using what Sensing identifies as "Data Triangulation", which means obtaining data from three angles: Insider, Outsider, and Researcher.¹⁴ The Insider will be the female inmates, whose evaluation of their involvement in the program will be key. The Outsider will be the BHCF staff; their findings /observations will add another key dimension to the evaluation process. The Researcher, which is me, with members from my Site Team, will be responsible for documenting and analyzing all data collected from observable and written sources. Having an evaluation process that utilizes feedback from these three angles (Insider, Outsider, & Researcher) can increase the "trustworthiness" of the project, according to Sensing.¹⁵ Sensing makes an additional point which resonates with me. He states, "It is not only what one observes that is crucial for interpretation, but also what one hears. The participants have voice. What people say allows them to co-author the interpretation with the researcher. Such hospitality on the part of the researcher will also give great weight to the findings of the project, while at the same time enhancing validity and reliability."¹⁶ The inclusion of the female inmates and the BHCF staff voice are significant to the outcome of this D. Min Project.

Regarding the questionnaire, it is anticipated that the questionnaire will be distributed to

¹⁴ Sensing, 75.

¹⁵ Sensing, 76.

¹⁶ Ibid.

all interested female inmates at Bedford Hills Correctional facility, with 50% of participants interviewed and their questionnaires completed.

CHAPTER 6 **MINISTERIAL COMPETENCIES**

The Process

The members of the Site Team and I discussed the process of the Competency Assessment. Following is the summary of the Site Team and my assessments regarding the ministerial competencies:

Theologian

Candidate understands the importance of studying a variety of theologians with a focus on the historical development of the community of faith. Candidate has formal and informal training in biblical studies with an added awareness of the importance of honing her exegetical skills.

Preacher

Candidate has the ability to interpret sacred scriptures efficiently with use of appropriate language and effective delivery. Candidate is able to organize material and address contemporary concerns effectively.

Worship Leader

Candidate is well grounded in the understanding and meaning of the sacraments or ceremonies of the community and its tradition. Candidate is able to lead rituals and forms of worship for specific occasions.

Prophetic Agent

Candidate has a sensitivity to and / or empathy with victims of social injustice. Candidate has the ability to communicate to others a passion for justice to inspire change.

Leader

Candidate has a willingness to and ability to take initiative as well as delegate responsibility to capable people. Candidate has the ability to share knowledge and resources with others; she also is willing to learn from others.

Counselor

Candidate is knowledgeable regarding human psychological development and skilled in relating and communicating with others. Candidate is able to guide others and to walk along them through their inner journey.

Pastor

Candidate spends time with and comforts those who are bereaved. Candidate welcomes, encourages and involves newcomers and seeks contact with inactive members.

Ecumenist

Candidate has knowledge and appreciation of other denominational, cultural and or religious traditions. Candidate has sensitivity to past histories of conflict, oppression and violence.

Evangelist

Candidate communicates effectively inside and outside one's immediate community the central message or truth to which the community as a whole has been entrusted to bear witness. Candidate seeks to insure the future of the faith community and the integrity of its message.

Administrator

Candidate has the ability to maintain effective lines of communication. Candidate has the ability to identify and make use of the personal and material resources of the congregation,

organization or community.

Competencies Chosen for Development

I) **RELIGIOUS EDUCATOR:** Challenges the hearer to discover new resources within her or himself and others. He or she invites others to a new and more spiritually – enlightened consciousness about self and society.

Strategies:

- A) I will study the latest evidenced based material through books, articles, and educational technology trainings regarding effective teaching strategies for women .
- B) I will consult with two educators who have experience teaching incarcerated women.

Evaluation:

A) I will attend and participate in three diverse spiritually enlighten services per quarter.

II) **SPIRITUAL LEADER:** To become grounded in spiritual disciplines and regularly exercising personal spiritual practices.

Strategies:

- A) I will devote weekly time to prayer, scriptures, affirming readings, and sermons.
- B) I will seek to attend weekly Sunday church services to increase my on-going relationship with God.

Evaluation: Each week I will document the spiritual practices I engaged in.

III) **PROFESSIONAL:** Demonstrates importance of professionalism in regards to managing time well and practicing self- care.

Strategies:

- A) Sync electronic calendar and “To Do List” to Smartphone to highlight tasks.
- B) I will include weekly workouts, quiet time, and time offs to my “To Do List”.

Evaluation:

- A) Each week 75% of my “To Do List” will be completed.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Timeline

Date	Task/Activity	Tools to Complete Task	Person Responsible
02/2016	Proposal Approval by Director	2 copies of proposal	VH (me)
	Meet with Site Team	At Judson: Review Plan of Implementation. Develop questionnaire	VH/ ST
	Meet with Advisor	Copy of approved proposal; Discuss next steps of D. Min project	VH/ EMS
	Establishing a dialogue with Dept. of Corrections	Discuss D. Min project	VH/ DOCCS
03/2016	Meeting with DOCCS/ Marymount Manhattan	Continued dialogue regarding D. Min project. Questionnaire completed.	VH/ST
	Meeting with Site Team	At Judson: Review of materials needed and created.	VH/ ST
	Meeting with Advisor	Report project status Identify instructors	VH/ EMS
	Writing	Report on status of Competencies	VH
4/2016	Meeting with MM & BHCF staff at Bedford Hills	Results of Questionnaire; women identified for project	VH/ BH staff/ ST
	Meeting with Advisor	Report project status	VH/ EMS
	Meeting with Site Team	At Judson: Status Report.	VH/ ST
	Meeting with Instructors	Judson or NYTS	VH/ I
	Weekly travel to Travel to BHCF	Project begins with female inmates –at Bedford Hills	VH/I
	Monthly Report	Project Status Write-Up	VH
	Writing	Report on status of Competencies	VH
5/2016	Meeting with Site Team	At Judson: Status Report.	VH/ ST
	Weekly travel to Travel to BHCF	Project continues with female inmates – at Bedford Hills	VH/I
	Meeting with BHCF	Discuss status of D.	VH

	staff	Min project	
	Teleconference Meeting with Advisor	Report project status	VH/ EMS
	Writing	Report on status of Competencies	VH
	Monthly Report	Project Status	VH
	Meeting with Instructors	Teleconference	VH/I
6/2016	Meeting with Site Team	At Judson: Status Report.	VH/ ST
	Weekly travel to Travel to BHCF	Project continues with female inmates – at Bedford Hills	VH/I
	Meeting with BHCF staff	Discuss status of D. Min project	VH
	Teleconference Meeting with Advisor	Report project status	VH/ EMS
	Writing	Report on status of Competencies	VH
	Monthly Report	Project Status	VH

Appendix B: Budget

Date	Task/Activity	Tools to Complete Task	Person Responsible	Budgetary Consideration/Cost	Source of Funding
02/2016	Proposal Approval by Director	2 copies of proposal	VH		
	Meet with Site Team	At Judson: Review Plan of Implementation. Develop questionnaire	VH/ ST	\$25	Me
	Meet with Advisor	Copy of approved proposal; Discuss & Identify Instructors	VH/ EMS		
	Establishing a dialogue with DOCCS	Discuss D. Min project	VH/ DOCCS/BH CF staff		
03/2016	Meeting with MM & BHCF staff	Continued dialogue regarding D. Min project. Questionnaire completed.	VH/ST	Gas/ Tolls	In Kind Contribution
	Meeting with Site Team	At Judson: Review of Materials needed and created	VH/ ST	\$300- \$500	In- kind contribution
	Meeting with Instructors	Teleconference	VH/ I		
	Meeting with Advisor	Report project status	VH/ EMS		
	Writing	Report on Status of Competencies	VH		
4/2016	Meeting with BHCF staff at Bedford Hills	Results of Questionnaire; women identified for project	VH/ BH staff/ ST	Gas/ Tolls	Me

	Meeting with Advisor	Report project status	VH/ EMS		
	Meeting with Site Team	At Judson: Status Report.	VH/ ST	\$25	Me
	Meeting with Instructors	Judson or NYTS:	VH/ I	\$25	Site Team/ Me
	Weekly travel to Travel to BHCF	Project begins with female inmates –at Bedford Hills	VH/I	Gas/ Tolls or Metro North Tickets/Taxi	In Kind or Me
	Monthly Report	Project Status Write-Up	VH		
	Writing	Report on Status of Competencies	VH		
5/2016	Meeting with Site Team	At Judson: Status Report.	VH/ ST	\$25	In kind
	Weekly travel to Travel to BHCF	Project continues with female inmates –at Bedford Hills	VH/I	Gas/ Tolls or Metro North Tickets/Taxi	In Kind or Me
	Meeting with BHCF staff	Discuss status of D. Min project	VH		
	Teleconference Meeting with Advisor	Report project status	VH/ EMS		
	Writing	Report on Status of Competencies	VH		
	Monthly Report	Project Status Write-Up	VH		
	Meeting with Instructors	Teleconference	VH/I		

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APPENDIX B –CURRICULUM FOR BEDFORD HILLS CORRECTIONAL FACILITY FOR WOMEN

Certificate in Christian Ministry and Leadership is a non-degree course of study to be offered to women in Bedford Hills Correctional Facility that will provide a basic introduction to theological education appropriate for students with Christian and non- Christian backgrounds. The curriculum will cover the basic theological disciplines of Biblical, historical, theological and practical studies. This is a unique and dynamic learning experience for those who seek to increase in both biblical literacy and spiritual understanding. The classes will be taught by Master and or Doctorate level graduates, of who most will be graduates from New York Theological Seminary. Students who complete the New York Theological Seminary Certificate in Ministry and Leadership will be able to obtain credits towards Associate and or Bachelor degrees. Candidates for admission to this certificate program need only to hold a high school degree or its equivalent.

Old Testament

The purpose of this course is to introduce the students to the major themes of the Old Testament. We will do this by engaging in a critical socio-historical framework. Attention will be paid to geographical concerns in the formation of Israel and in the Ancient Near East. In addition the students will examine the diverse functions and contribution of women in the Old Testament.

New Testament

The main purpose of this course is to introduce the students to the Socio-Political, Socio-Cultural, and Socio-Religious setting of the New Testament. The goals of this class is for all students to be able to: Identify major themes and personalities in the biblical studies; Identify the significant roles women held with Jesus and in the development of early Christianity; and Use the New Testament as a source for understanding early Christianity.

Biblical Exegesis

This course, Biblical Exegesis, is designed to introduce and discuss the theories and practice of biblical interpretation. This course encourages students to develop critical use of the perspectives, tools and methods of biblical scholarship. The goal of all exegesis is to explain what the text meant for its original audience, in its original historical setting, and to explain what the text means for today in the hope of proclaiming the “God’s Good News” for all people.

Introduction to Theology

This course offers the students an introduction to Christian Theology through a survey of writings from classical and contemporary theologians. This process will enable the students to articulate their own current theological perspective and its meanings and implications for life and ministry.

Church History

This course will be an introduction and overview of Church History, from the days of the apostles, up to the 21st Century. Students will begin looking at the formation of the church from the New Testament period and move through the patristic, medieval, modern, and postmodern periods.

Introduction to Pastoral Care

This course will introduce the students to the varied functions of pastoral care. The women will learn aspects of assisting people who are experiencing loss and or grief. Special focus will be given to identifying the diverse array of emotions that Chaplains and supporters experience when working with others.

Church Ethics

This course will focus how people, past and present, gage moral reasoning, social critical analysis, and ethical action for the just resolution of social conflict. Of particular interest is an examination of the West's historic understandings of morality, ethical actions, institutions, culture, society, the "poor," the state, and how these other institutions effect modern life. The course is designed to challenge students to examine their understanding of moral community life, and to assess the places and ways in which religious teachings, practices, and beliefs affect that life.

Women & Leadership

This course will expose the women to effective leadership skills that examine knowledge of self and knowledge of others in clarifying their identity, self-image, and roles in a variety of expanding communities. Knowledge of others encourages students to consider and understand the way others view and respond to the world at large. Students are able to assess their present strengths and weaknesses and realize their potential for leadership. Effective leadership rests in the ability to combine knowledge of self and knowledge of others to advance both personal and group goals.

APPENDIX C – LETTER TO DOCCS

Commissioner Anthony J. Annucci
Department of Corrections and Community Supervision
1220 Washington Avenue Bldg. 2
Albany, NY 12203

To Commissioner Annucci,

Valerie H. Holly is a second year Doctor of Ministry student at New York Theological Seminary, (NYTS) which is located in New York, NY. I am the NYTS Academic Dean and I am writing to you because we at New York Theological Seminary approve of Ms. Holly's pilot project which is to establish an onsite certificate program in theological education to be offered to the female inmates at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility. The onsite pilot certificate program will be a two year non-degree course of study that will provide Christian theological education suitable for women with Christian and non-Christian backgrounds. The onsite certificate program's curriculum introduces the women to theological disciplines and practical studies – specifically focusing on appropriate leadership skills for women. The women who participate in this pilot program need only have a high school diploma or its equivalent, however advanced degree students would be welcomed also. Please note that the Marymount Manhattan College Program at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility has agreed to sponsor the NYTS Certificate in Christian Ministry at BHCF.

The pilot can begin with 15-20 BHCF women. The course of study is comprised of ten courses, covering four semesters within a two year span. There will be two courses each semester, each course, twelve sessions, each session 2-3 hours in duration. The fourth semester will cover four courses, each course six weeks in duration.. The instructors selected for this initiative will be experienced educators with a minimum Master of Divinity (M.Div.) level of education. Students who complete this course of study will receive an NYTS Certificate of Completion.

For more than thirty years , NYTS has offered onsite theological programs to the men in the Sing Sing Correctional Facility that has yielded mostly positive results for all the stakeholders: the male inmates, DOCCS, the educators, and the inmates' families. We expect the onsite pilot program in theological education offered to the BHCF women to provide similar results for all of their stakeholders as well. Specifically, Ms. Holly anticipates the onsite certificate program in theological education to assist the BHCF female inmates in obtaining new cognitive and behavioral ways of thinking, processing and interacting within their world scope. In addition, the women will acquire leadership skills which can be utilized throughout their life.

If there are any questions or concerns you may contact me or Valerie Holly, 917-797-5051, at your earliest convenience. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kirkpatrick Cohall
NYTS Academic Dean

APPENDIX D - THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP
CURRICULUM-
Valerie H. Holly, M. Div., LCSW

My name is Valerie H. Holly; I am a Doctor of Ministry candidate at New York Theological Seminary. For my D.Min project I have developed a “Theological Education and Leadership (TEL)” Curriculum” that is designed to introduce women to supportive, encouraging and transformative aspects of Christian education. The TEL curriculum is composed of Biblical, historical, theological and practical studies with an intentional focus on the participation and contributions of women throughout the Bible. The curriculum will offer a unique learning experience for those who seek to increase their biblical as well as spiritual understanding. The Theological Education and Leadership curriculum is open to and appropriate for women with Christian and non- Christian backgrounds.

I am currently seeking women who are willing to participate in a “Pilot” program of my TEL curriculum which, at the end, will evaluate the program’s benefit to women. The Pilot program will introduce the participants to the eight courses in the TEL curriculum. The Pilot requires a commitment to attend all eight sessions. The sessions will be covered in three weeks: 1st and 2nd weeks, two evenings, 6pm-8:30pm (or mornings, 10am-12pm, if preferable) and 1 Saturday afternoon 1pm-4pm; 3rd week, two evenings 6pm-8:30pm or Saturday 1pm-6pm.

Each participant will need to sign a Consent Form, complete a brief questionnaire and at the end of the Pilot program complete an evaluation. Each woman who attends all eight sessions will receive a Certificate of Completion thanking them for honoring their commitment to attend all the sessions of the Pilot program. At each session there will be a light meal and transportation to each of the sessions.

Please note that the TEL “Pilot” program is expected to begin in October 2016. If there are any questions or concerns, please contact me at your earliest convenience, by email or phone, my number is 917-797-5051.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this

matter. Valerie Holly

Below is the actual Theological Education and Leadership curriculum for your review.

Old Testament

The purpose of this course is to introduce the students to the major themes of the Old Testament. Attention will be paid to the geographical formation of Israel and the Ancient Near East. Students will examine the diverse functions and contribution of women in the Old Testament.

New Testament

The purpose of this course is to introduce the students to the Socio-Political, Socio-Cultural, and Socio-Religious setting of the New Testament in an effort to extract meaning out of the biblical text in an understandable manner. In this course students will become familiar with the significant roles women held with Jesus and in the development of early Christianity.

Biblical Exegesis

This course, Biblical Exegesis, is designed to introduce and discuss the theories and practice of biblical interpretation. The goal of all exegesis is to explain what the text meant for its original audience, in its original historical setting, and to explain what the text means for today in the hope of proclaiming the “God’s Good News” for all people.

Introduction to Theology

This course offers the women an introduction to Christian Theology through a survey of writings from classical and contemporary theologians. Students will receive an overview of diverse theologies (Liberation Theology, Womanist Theology, and Black Theology, etc.) to enable the women to articulate their own current or emerging theological perspective and its meanings and implications for life today.

Church History

This course will be an introduction and overview of Church History, from the days of the apostles, up to the 21st Century. Students will begin looking at the formation of the church from the New Testament period and move through the medieval, modern, and postmodern periods.

Church Ethics

This course is an overview of the field of Christian social ethics. Our task is to discover how people, past and present, engage (d) in ethical reflection, moral reasoning, social critical analysis, and ethical action for the just resolution of social conflict. The course is designed to challenge students to examine their understanding of moral community life, and to assess the places and ways in which religious teachings, practices, and beliefs affect that life.

Women & Leadership

This course will expose the women to effective leadership skills that examine knowledge of self and knowledge of others in clarifying their identity, self-image, and roles in a variety of expanding communities. Students are able to assess their present strengths and weaknesses and realize their potential for leadership.

Pastoral Care

Students in this course will be introduced to the definition and role of Pastoral Care. They will learn of the term “Action/ Reflection”. Out of an intense involvement with persons in need, students develop new awareness of themselves as persons and of the needs of others.

cc V. H. Holly
A. Baumgartner
E. Moody-Shepherd

APPENDIX E – CHURCH’S RESPONSE TO MASS INCARCERATION

Family & Mass Incarceration

A PANEL DISCUSSION OF PEOPLE DIRECTLY IMPACTED BY MASS INCARCERATION

In their own voice, they will tell their stories of how Mass incarceration dismantled their families, hopes & dreams and what it takes to rebuild.

With a focus on Women and Children

Mr. Carlos Jones 

Mr. David Roll 

Mrs. Tihoba Bain 

Ms. Sarah Zarba 

Ms. Lori Merritt 

What the Church Need to know

Beulah Heights First Pentecostal Church
Saturday, February 11, 2017
12pm – 3pm
782 Orchard St, New Haven, CT 06511









APPENDIX F – TEL SURVEY

Theological Education & Leadership (TEL) Pilot Survey

Instructor: Valerie H. Holly, M. Div., LCSW **Date:**

Hours

Days	Dates	Time
Wed & Friday	Oct. 12 & 14	6p - 8p
Saturday	Oct. 15	1p - 3p
Wed & Friday	Oct. 19 & 21	6p - 8p
Saturday	Oct. 22,	1p - 3p
Wed & Friday	Oct. 26 & 28	6p - 8p

Name: _____ **Age:** _____

Level of

Education

Ethnicity: _____

Spiritual

Background: Catholic _____ Muslim _____

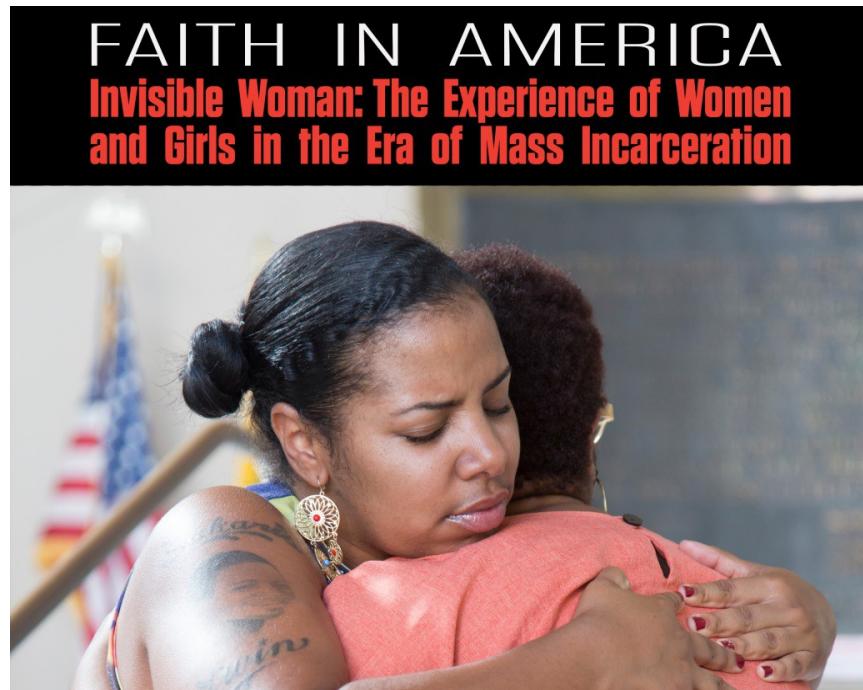
Protestant _____ Judaism _____

Atheist _____ Other _____

1. What is your interest in participating in the TEL Pilot program?

2. Describe your spiritual or religious background, if any?

APPENDIX G – FAITH IN AMERICA – UTS FLYER



Faith In America with Michelle Alexander

Date: Tuesday, October 18th, 2016

Time: 6:30 PM (Doors will open at 6:00 PM)

Location: James Chapel at the Union Theological Seminary at 121st and Broadway

This event is oversubscribed. We will have additional seating and live feed available in the nearby Refectory.

Please join Michelle Alexander, visiting professor at Union Theological Seminary and author of *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* for a panel discussion on, *Invisible Woman: The Experience of Women and Girls in the Era of Mass Incarceration*.

APPENDIX H – OVERVIEW OF TEL TEACHING SCHEDULE

Oct. 19, 2016 Email sent to TEL Instructors -- Overview of TEL Curriculum and description of the TEL Pilot program. 5p-7p for all classes except Saturday 3p-5p

1st Week Thurs. Oct. 20 -- Overview of TEL/ Introduction – Valerie Oct.
Fri. 21 - Introduction to Theology- Micah

2nd Week Tues. Oct. 25 – 1st Testament/ Biblical Exegesis- Valerie & Lance
Wed. Oct. 26 - 2nd Testament / Biblical Exegesis- Valerie & Lance

3rd Week Tues. Nov. 1 - Church History- Rev. Gale Nov.
Thurs. 3 -- Women & Leadership – Valerie
Sat. Nov. 5- Pastoral Care - Faith

Each class will require participants to write a “Reflection”, which is their words, their understanding of the topic covered.

APPENDIX I CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION



APPENDIX J TEL PILOT EVALUATION FORM

Instructor: Valerie H. Holly M. Div., LCSW

Instructions: Please indicate your level of agreement with the statements listed below	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The topics covered on theology and the Bible were relevant to me.				
2. Participation and interaction was encouraged.				
3. The materials distributed were appropriate and provided useful information.				
4. The time allotted for each session was sufficient				
5. The meeting room, food and facilities were suitable.				

6. What information did you find the most useful from the TEL Pilot program?
7. What information did you find the least useful from the TEL Pilot program?
- 8.. Would you recommend other women to participate in the TEL Pilot program, if so why?
9. Since you have taken the TEL Pilot, would you want to learn more theological/Christian education and take the actual TEL Curriculum if it was offered?
10. Other Comments:

**APPENDIX K COMPLETED TEL
PILOT EVALUATION**

Instructor: Valerie H Holly, M.Div. LSCW

Student: L

Dates of Trainings: 10/20/16, 10/21/16, 10/25/16, 10/26/16, 11/1/16, 11/3/16, 11/5/16

QUESTION #	RESPONSE & COMMENTS
1	Strongly Agree
2	Strongly Agree
3	Strongly Agree
4	Disagree
5	Strongly Agree
6	I found all topics to be interesting
7	N/A However, the overview of Exegesis/Hermeneutics should be reviewed a little more. I could use more guidance with my daily readings of scripture.
8	Absolutely I started the Pilot with such resentment because of days and timing. It started on a rainy weekend for me, after sharing who I was, a calm came over me.
9	Yes, I would.
10	

APPENDIX L TEL BROCHURE

If Interested – Please Fill Out Below	
Name	<input type="text"/>
Address	<input type="text"/>
Phone #	<input type="text"/>
Comments:	<input type="text"/>



Theological Education & Leadership Curriculum

Presented by
Valerie H. Holly
M. Div., LCSW
Doctor of Ministry Candidate

New York Theological Seminary

For Information
Phone: 917-797-5051
vhholy@gmail.com

Theological Education & Leadership Curriculum

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